The Man Picked up by the Gods

Volume 3

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Note from me (eCookie): neotranslations makes a lot of commentary at the beginning of the chapters. Also blogspot formats his sites different so problems came with the editing. If there is anything obscure in the chapter I recommend to check out the chapter site on his blog to see the commentary.

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Chapter 1

Right after I sent the Jamil Household off, I ran towards the mine as training.

On the way, I noticed the crowd of adventurers. Then I remembered that a lot of people came to hunt the grell frogs.

It was along the way so I took a look, but… I wonder if I should also catch a few more.

Thinking that, I took out my waders from my 'Item Box', and headed towards the swamp.

"There sure are plenty of people…" [Ryouma]

There's probably over 100 people around here. There are also other people going to a different swamp, so I guess there's just that many people…

As I thought that while I looked, I noticed that there were people wearing waders and jumpsuits here and there. Unexpectedly, it would appear it sold quite a bit.

Then my eyes stopped on one group. A group with five members, and all of them wearing waders and jumpsuits. I remember those faces. If I recall correctly, they are the ones who sold me the bloody slime, the Pier of Scheme.

I'm here after all, so I guess I might as well go and say hi.

Thinking that, I went closer, but… did something happen? From what I saw, Kai-san, looking slightly down, was patting the backs of the people around him as he encouraged them saying it can't be helped.

"Hello." [Ryouma]
"Huh? You are… from that time. Ryouma-kun, right? Thanks for last time." [Kai]
"No, not at all. After all, I also managed to get a good slime." [Ryouma]

Then, Thayne, the man who was drunk last time, stepped forward.

"Are you the guy who bought the slime last time?" [Thayne]
"Yes, that's right." [Ryouma]
"I see. Sorry about last time. I'm Thayne. I drank a bit too much that time and was quite drunk, so I don't remember much, but… You really saved us by buying that slime. On top of that, you even told us a way to make a profit, so thank you. [Thayne]

"Please don't mind it. That aside, did something happen? You looked like you were making a difficult face." [Ryouma]
"It's not exactly a problem, just a little. Before that, let me introduce these guys." [Kai]

As he said that, Kai's line of sight moved over to the two men who took Thayne away last time. Kai-san put his hand on the shoulder of the slightly shorter guy, and then said this.

"This one's Kei, my little brother." [Kai]
"A pleasure to meet you." [Kei]
"A pleasure to meet you too." [Ryouma]
"And next, is this one." [Kai]
"Payron, nice to meet you." [Payron]
"A pleasure to meet you." [Ryouma]
"We five together are the Pier of Scheme, but you knew that, right?" [Kai]
"Yes." [Ryouma]
"Actually, I used to be a fisherman." [Kai]

Fisherman? "That's fine, but why all of the sudden?" I thought. Then Shin-san continued.

"Sorry, but Kai's bad at explaining, so I'll explain." [Shin]

From what he told me, the Town of Scheme is a village situated by the edge of the biggest lake in this country, and is the biggest fishing village in the entire country.

It was there that all five of them, the Pier of Scheme, was born and raised. It's because of that, that they're used to handling nets, so although there is quite a difference between mud and water, they were still faster than most of the other adventurers. And like that, they were able to catch plenty of grell frogs.

Looks like they made quite the killing in the past few days. And today they've already managed to catch over 20 grell frogs, but when they left the basket unattended for just a moment, someone apparently switched their basket. Unfortunately, that was something lent by the guild, so quite a lot of people have it. With that in mind, it's impossible to find out who the culprit is just by looking for the basket.

"So your catch was stolen." [Ryouma]
"Is that really it?" [Shin]

As I thought, "What's with that response?" Kei-san showed me the basket. Inside were 20 grell frogs. However, each and every one of them was weak. A few of those were even at death's door.

"If it's just the number, then it's just a switch. But with the quality in mind… " [Shin]
"Apparently, someone sucked at catching and failed. Because of his technique the grell frogs are so weak. Weakened grell frogs go for less, and if they die, then they'll go for even lesser. Even if we went to the town now, these little critters will still die on the way." [Kai]
"That's why somebody decided to switch this basket with ours." [Thayne]
"It'd be fine if we just went and caught more, but it still stings. But that's all." [Shin]

I see… oh, that's right!

"Do you know how much this would be if you sold all of them?" [Ryouma]
"This bunch will be really weak once they get to the guild, so 200 suits at most. If they die, then it'll go as low as 50. We learned our mistake from the previous case, so this time we did our assignments properly." [Shin]
"So if the conditions are good, they'll go for 1000 suits per frog, right?" [Ryouma]
"Right. But what about it?" [Shin]
"Then in that case, will you sell these to me for 300 suits per frog?" [Ryouma]

Shin-san titled his head in puzzlement when he heard what I'd just said.

"I don't mind, but is that ok?" [Shin]
"The price is higher than the guild, so it's good for us, but…" [Kai]
"You'll be at a loss, you know?" [Thayne]
"That may be so if I were selling them to the guild. However, I am using these for myself, so there won't be a problem." [Ryouma]
"For yourself? Are you going to make medicine?" [Shin]
"Yes. I can use these to make antidotes, so I came here with the intention of preparing some household medicines." [Ryouma]
"I see. The price is higher than the guild would offer to us, so we're grateful." [Shin]
"We're going to catch more to sell to the guild, so go ahead and buy everything." [Kai]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

Like this I purchased 25 grell frogs from them for 7,500 suits.

"You're… amazing." [Shin]
"I also thought it back then, when you brought out that small gold coin. But you really do bring out money generously." [Kai]
"It makes sense after seeing just how popular your store is though." [Thayne]

Ah, looks like they came to my store.

"Oh, did you make use of my store's services?" [Ryouma]
"Actually, we were only planning to try it out once, but then, not only is it cheap, it also cleans better than washing by hand. So we ended up using it a lot." [Shin]
"And lately, because of all these mud, we've been going there every day." [Kai]
"We were surprised at first, but it looks like the slimes can be useful too. I guess if you try it can turn out to be something good too." [Thayne]

Ho, ho. Looks like I got myself some good regulars.

"Laundry's gonna be a pain once we get back to our village. How about setting up a branch there? If you want, I can even introduce you a good place to negotiate with the fishing union." [Kai]
"Talks about branch stores have come up from time to time, but I'm not planning to set up a branch as of yet." [Ryouma]

Since I'd just recently hired Caulkins-san and the others…

"Well that's true, it's certainly not something you can easily set up. But if you do decide to set one up in our town, then contact me. I can help you out with looking for a good spot for your store." [Kai]
"After all, if you use our connection with the fishing union, you should be able to get an even better place than what the merchant guild can get you." [Thayne]

Using a community based organization rather than the guild…Right. That might be a good idea.

"Thank you very much. When that time comes, I'll be relying on you." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I left them and headed towards the abandoned mine.

The first thing I did when I got to the mine was to bring out the slimes and rimel birds from the 'Dimension Home'. Then we dug a hole in the tunnel and created a place for me to live in, and an alchemy room. All the furniture, including the shelf, were made out of stone. Yeah, this should be good enough for the time being.

Afterwards, I let everyone else do as they please except for the bloody slime and cleaner slimes. Then I processed the grell frogs at the alchemy room that I'd just made, since I needed to process the weak ones quickly, and I also haven't process the ones I caught the other day.

By the way, if you're wondering, I put the grell frogs I caught the other day in a water tank made out of stone inside my 'Dimension Home'. Provided they were caught skillfully, then they shouldn't have any problem living for around a week. With that much time, a normal doctor would be able to process it well.

However, in my case, I have the bloody slime. I don't need that much time.

First, I drew a magic formation of separation on a corner of the floor of the alchemy room. Then with earth magic I made out a vessel of stone. Next, I took out the grell frogs from the "Dimension Home', and then put it into a cage I prepared, by the corner of the alchemy room. These are the ones I just bought today.

After that, I randomly took out one of them, and killed it with a knife as it tried to run. At that, I ordered the bloody slime to enter it through its wound.

After the bloody slime finishes draining its blood, what came next was disassembly. Following my 'Pharmacy' skill's knowledge, I uninterestedly separated the important parts. Not even a drop of blood came out during this. The bloody slime's draining was perfect.

After this the next process is to remove the refuse and the mucus, wash the separated parts, and wash off the dirt that stuck to the grell frog's exterior during the disassembly and the refuse removal.

If these refuses aren't properly removed, then the quality will greatly drop. Unfortunately, removing these mucus is extremely difficult. Moreover, if this process is done roughly, then its internal organs will suffer, causing the quality to drop again. That's why it's imperative that this process be done carefully and thoroughly. This process is extremely delicate… If you do it normally that is.

I ordered a cleaner slime to clean off the filth. Responding to that, the cleaner slime put the parts inside it, and began to wash off the mucus. Shortly after, the cleaner slime finished without either leaving a wound or taking much time. Its work was perfect.

Next, I take the parts that have been processed, put it on top of the magic formation, and dry it by separating it from its water contents.

Fire and wind magic would normally be used in this process as it's no good with just one or the other. It's hard for the wind to get rid of the water content by itself, and if you keep it up for too long, the inner organs will start to suffer. With fire the drying is fast, but a little error would alter the ingredient's effect. And if poorly done, it's also possible to burn it, rendering it useless.

But I'm not using fire, so there won't be any alterations. There also won't be any damage.

After processing the internal organs of the grell frog in this way, I used 'Identify' on it. The result of the skill showed that all the parts have been processed perfectly. Naturally, that goes to mean that all the parts are of the highest quality.

After that, I continued to quietly process the grell frogs. In the end, out of the 25, I managed to get everything else except for 19 to the level of highest quality.

And although the 19's quality were lower, they were still considered to be high-quality ingredients. With this, the ingredients are more than useable.

As for the reason regarding why the quality dropped, it would appear that the inner organs were damaged since the grell frogs became weak, causing the flow of blood to become bad. It was probably treated roughly while being captured. It's really important to be careful while catching these grell frogs.

Incidentally, after I had disassembled the grell frogs, I served the leftover skin and meat to the rimel birds. I brought it to them as I thought to myself, "Will they eat it? I mean they eat grell frogs, so… right?" Much to my relief, they did in fact eat it. Happily too. From what I'd heard these rimel birds like to eat meat, fishes, fruits, vegetables, and grains. But for the meantime, I guess I'll focus on feeding them meat. After all, I can get those from Zeke-san's store.

As I passed the day like that, eventually it became dark outside. Just to be safe, I had the slimes and rimel birds gather in the mine to make sure that they're safe. It's true that the slimes have gotten stronger, but it's still dangerous in the night. Then I blocked the entrance with building stones, only allowing enough of a gap to let air pass.

"It's been a while since I've had a night like this… This reminds me of the time I just came into this world." [Ryouma]

That time, I read Gayn's letter, made that house, found that cliff, learned earth magic and dug a cave with it. At the start I could only shave the rocks at my fingertips a bit with 'Break Rock', but after repeating it a bit, I was eventually able to dig a hole. Then I just blocked the entrance with a wall of rock I made with 'Rock'… After that, I gradually improved the environment. After I'd gotten used to the forest, I also started to hunt and train in the evening, but…

"I'm not really in the mood right now… Besides, I have some ingredients with me, so should I go ahead and make some medicines?" [Ryouma]

I aimlessly entered the alchemy room where I processed the grell frogs, and took out all the gathered herbs that were preserved by drying from my 'Item Box' and put them on the shelves. I want a medicine cabinet to put these ingredients in. I'll make it one day.

The medicine I can make from these ingredients is an……. antidote. I have just enough grell frog livers to make it too.

The ingredients I need for it are a grell frog's liver, a poisonous plant called Kasuri, which by weakening the poison of the Kasuri Herb, it's possible to use it as medicine. And then there's the fruit of Kunashi, the invigorating flower of Josh, and the Ufer herb that causes diuresis.

First I use earth magic and create a pot of rock and two spatulas. Then I make a mortar and pestle. Next time, maybe I should just buy the tools from around instead… I've done everything so far with just my magic, but it's definitely better to get some proper tools, right?

While I was thinking that, I used water magic and filled the pot, and put the cut Kasuri herb and fruit of Kunashi inside. With the electric magic 'Microwave', I made the water go faster, causing its temperature to rise and mix at the same time. Some materials are weak to heat, so I don't use this method much, but the Kasuri Herb and the fruit of Kunashi aren't affected much by heat. Even if I boil these, they'll be fine, so it's all cool.

Like that, I boiled the ingredients, and the color of the ingredients began to dissolve, changing into a purple liquid. Looking at its outer appearance it looks very poisonous.

By deciding based on the appearance of the color of the liquid, I stopped 'Microwave'. While I waited for the medicine to cool down naturally, I thoroughly grinded the grell frog livers that had already been dried. Then I touched the liquid. When I thought that the temperature was good enough, I threw the grinded livers into it, and stirred.

But this really is convenient. This 'Pharmacy' skill that is. I should've been out of my expertise when it comes to the herbs of this world, but because of this skill I can even learn to figure out the timing just from the color and by feeling the temperature.

While I was thinking that, the liquid in the pot cooled down greatly. I guess it's time.

I prepared the flower of Josh and the Ufer herb, threw just the right size into the pot, and lightly stirred the pot. I left it alone for a while, and waited for the effects of the ingredients to seep in.

"What should I do until then?" [Ryouma]

At that time, I randomly left the alchemy room, and noticed the rimel birds. There, I decided to take out my guitar from the 'Item Box', and I played two national anime ending songs, because I saw the moon through the hole I made for ventilation.

When I finished playing…

"———————— !" [Rimel birds]

An incomprehensible sound echoed within the cave.

"What!? It hurts… can't you guys shut up for a moment?" [Ryouma]

The source of the sound were the rimel birds. It looks like they were chirping beautifully like a musical performance this time around too, but because we were inside a cave, it echoed, and the sound became too loud.

I took more damage than I expected, but it seems the rimel birds are perfectly fine. What kind of ears do these birds have…?

Incidentally, the slimes don't have ears, so they don't have any problems either.

Afterwards, I passed the time by listening to the rimel bird's calmer singing voice, and by eating dinner.

When I got back to the alchemy room, the flower of Josh and the Ufer herb's effect had already been extracted, so I figured it should be done soon.

As I used 'Identify' on the pot's contents.

Incomplete Antidote (High Quality)
An antidote for poison made out of grell frog liver.
Because of the grell frog's liver, the poison will be disassembled. And because of the other ingredients, one will be reenergized and the poison will be ejected. There are plenty of effects, but this antidote is mostly effective against paralysis. It's recommended to drink plenty of water while using this antidote.

"Good, looks like it's a success so far. Next is…" [Ryouma]

I take out a huge cloth form my 'Item Box', and had the cleaner slimes clean it. This is one of the belongings of the bandits I defeated back at the forest. The stitches are thin, so it can be useful for straining the medicine.

I put a cleaner slime inside an empty pot, then after having the pot cleaned, I affixed the cloth on that pot by wrapping the string of the sticky slime around the pot.

I slowly poured the liquid from the other pot into the pot with a cloth attached to it. Like that, the liquid poured into that empty pot, and was filtered.

After I finished pouring everything, I took the cloth and wringed it one last time.

And then after stirring the medicine with a beautiful spatula, I used 'Identify' on it. The part about it being incomplete had disappeared, and the high-quality became highest quality. That high-quality was before I used the filter, of course it would change.

… Making the medicine went well, but what should I do with this now?

"If I preserve this, then I could use this as a pill instead of as oral medicine… Or no, the ingredients aren't sufficient, so I guess I won't be able to use it one way or the other." [Ryouma]

Thinking about it a bit more, to begin with, I possess the poison resist skill, so half-assed poison won't work against me. Right, in other words there's no opportunity for me to use this. It's a good idea prepare things like this just in case, but even then I don't need an entire pot of medicine……

For the meantime, let's make a funnel and a dipper with earth magic. And so, I prepared 20 bottles, and distributed the medicine one by one. After I finished filling up the 20 bottles, I put away 19 of it into my 'Item

Box'. And then I left the alchemy room while playing with the remaining bottle as I went towards the dwelling space.

"What should I do? … Should I sell these over at Serge's? Or should I hand these over to Jeff-san's?" [Ryouma]

As I was thinking that, I dropped the medicine bottle while I was playing with it.

"Oh no–…" [Ryouma]

The bottle fell to the ground, and because I was playing with it, the cap wasn't sealed tightly and so, the contents spilled to the floor.

"Somehow I'm kind of not into it today… I wonder if it's because of that thing about mental regression that Kufo mentioned… Right now I'm 11 years old, but mentally speaking I'm already over 40. So is that the reason why I'm feeling lonely from being separated with the others? … Even though I was perfectly fine in my previous life during times like these…" [Ryouma]

There were plenty of times when I or my colleagues resigned. Either because of overwork, or because the work was too hard.

… Of course I'm not really lonely enough to go crying, but somehow I'm feeling down.

I thought that for 10 seconds.

"… Whatever, I'll just go sleep." [Ryouma]

"Right, I'll go to sleep after having used up my energy," I thought to myself. So before I went to sleep I decided to clean up the spilled medicine. But when I glanced at the place where the medicine fell, the bottle was still there, but the contents were gone. It was clean.

"Huh? Where did the medicine go?" [Ryouma]

There were several slimes loitering in the room. And amongst them were the cleaner slimes, so I guess they just cleaned it by themselves? Well, whatever. It's not bad to have my work done for me. So I'll just leave it at that.

As I thought that, I decided to sleep.

Chapter 2

The next day.

I went out as soon as I opened my eyes only to notice that it was still dark.

"Did I sleep too early yesterday? It's too early to go to the town." [Ryouma]

So instead, I decided to expand the tunnel by making a storehouse and a kitchen. Then I also decided to arrange the things in my 'Item Box'. I've already put everything related to medicinal herbs on the shelves of the alchemy room, but there are still things that haven't been dealt with like the unsold pelts.

Pelt, pelt, pelt, pelt, pelt, black tea… black tea should be put in the kitchen.
Pelt, pelt, pelt, pelt, pelt, pelt, money… ah, these are from the bandits… weapon, armor, armor, weapon, weapon, weapon…… Come to think of it, I've forgotten about that Melzen's spear. I should try it out next time. Next is… pelt.

"More pelt? There're too many pelts! Why did I take everything so diligently!?" [Ryouma]

And so I arranged things for a while like that when I suddenly found something strange.

"What is this?"

What was in my hand right now was a goblet. All of my utensils are made with earth magic, so pretty much all of them are made out of stone, or shaped out of wood… But this goblet is silver. Moreover, there are decorations of gold here and there, and it even had gems embedded into it.

Why do I have something so luxurious in my 'Item Box'? This shouldn't be something that belongs to the bandits. I confirmed everything before leaving the forest, and I didn't have anything this amazing. Still… I feel like I've seen this before.

Thinking that, I used 'Identify'.

Sacred Treasure; The goblet of the God of Wine, Tekun.
This sacred treasure was created by the God of Wine, Tekun.
This sacred treasure has been enchanted with the power of the God of Wine, and can bring forth limitless wine in exchange for magic power.
Owner: Ryouma Takebayashi

!?!?!? Wait a moment, what is this! Why do I have something so exaggerated like a sacred treasure!

……!!!

"I remember! This is something I got when I met Tekun! Wait! I brought it with me!?" [Ryouma]

Now that I think about it, I was quite panicked that time, so I just put everything into my 'Item Box'… Did I accidentally put it in?

"Isn't that rather clumsy? Well in any case, let's go to the church!" [Ryouma]

I gently put the goblet into my 'Item Box', and have the slimes enter into the 'Dimension Home', and then I quickly rush to the town. Actually, I'm already going at full speed.

As soon as I got to the town, I headed straight to the church. And when I got to the church, the door of the church opened. The one standing there was the girl who greeted me when I met Kufo last time.

"Ara, are you here to worship?" [Girl]
"Yes, would it be alright to go now?" [Ryouma]
"Yes, go ahead. Still, it's certainly quite strange to have someone come this early." [Girl]

I don't really have much time to chat, but…

"I'm quite busy lately, so I don't really have time to come except around this time." [Ryouma]
"Oh, really?" [Girl]

I was also brought to the chapel today. Actually, I already know the way, so there's actually no need, and I could have just refused and ran. But of course, I have to keep up appearances. I give my thanks to the girl, sit at a chair, and pray.

Tekun! Take me to the divine realm!! As I asked that, a few seconds passed, and the world was filled with light. My prayer reached him!

As the light stopped, I turned my head. There, I saw Tekun. As I confirmed Tekun's appearance, I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Ryouma, you called? Actually, how did you manage to call me? I clearly heard your voice just now." [Tekun]
"I prayed at the church." [Ryouma]
"Oi, oi, you shouldn't be able to call me with just that, you know? If we could be called with just something like that, then we'd always be getting calls." [Tekun]
"Even if you tell me that… But anyway, rather than that, I have something to talk to you about." [Ryouma]
"What is it? Did something happen?" [Tekun]

I used my 'Item Box', and took the goblet out. When Tekun saw that, his eyes opened wide as if he were shocked, and he alternately looked at the goblet and the hole from the 'Item Box'.

"Last time we met, you just left this with me and left, right?" [Ryouma]
"Y–yeah." [Tekun]
"That time, I tried to look for some snacks in my 'Item Box' to eat while drinking, but then I ran out of time… So I quickly cleaned up, but in the process I accidentally took your goblet with me. I only noticed it this morning while I was arranging things from my 'Item Box'… So… I'm sorry that I took it without asking you." [Ryouma]
"You know, I don't actually mind it. But that aside, you were able to take it with you?" [Tekun]
"I accidentally put it in my 'Item Box' so I guess that's why. I was also able to properly take it out over there on the other side." [Ryouma]

When Tekun heard that, he scratched his head, and then said this.

"Can you show me that for a bit?" [Tekun]

I gave him the goblet as he said that while pointing at it. Then Tekun looked at the goblet as he caressed it.

"… Ryouma, I don't mind if you take this. Sacred treasures might be something that the humans revere, but I can make something like this anytime. Moreover, this has already become your possession." [Tekun]
"Mine? Now that you mention it, when I used 'Identify' it said, "Owner: Ryouma Takebayashi." [Ryouma]
"That's it. From the looks of things, ever since I passed that to you and left, it had apparently already been considered as me granting you a sacred treasure. So this is already completely yours. Anyway, drink." [Tekun]

As Tekun said that, a bottle of liquor appeared out of nowhere, and he poured that into the goblet.

"Is it alright? To give it that simply. Also, it's still morning…" [Ryouma]
"Don't mind it. Right now you're only a soul. Your body won't get drunk. And more than anything, a drink comes before talking, right? As for the goblet, I already mentioned it, but I can make something like that anytime. So don't mind it. Besides, there've also been humans who received our sacred treasures in the past. The otherworlders had all sorts of request you know? Abilities were also popular but the most common one was receiving a sacred treasure. And as for receiving sacred treasure, there's no problem with that at all. So enough of that, liquor's more important." [Tekun]

Is it fine to be that irresponsible!?

"Well if someone finds out that you have a sacred treasure, it will certainly cause a commotion, so you better make sure to hide it. It's fine as long as you use it drink by yourself, right?" [Tekun]
"I see… alright. For the meantime, it's good that there's no problem. While I didn't do it on purpose, I was still really scared when I found out I took something from the divine realm." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I drank the wine in the goblet. The liquor is delicious as always, but the alcohol feels weaker today than before. Is Tekun being considerate?

"Gahaha, rather than it be problematic for you to just take – although it's also kind of clumsy – but since that kind of thing is being managed thoroughly, rather than just being able to take this kind of thing carelessly, most shouldn't even have been able to see this. So don't mind it.

Besides, that goblet just brings out wine, you know? Compare that to a sacred treasure that allows its wielder to become stronger, and depending on their strength, cut castle walls like paper, this is way safer. That aside, I'm more concerned about how you were able to take a sacred treasure with you, but… eh, whatever." [Tekun]

"Is that alright? Or rather, was I not supposed to be able to bring it with me?" [Ryouma]
"Of course you shouldn't have been able to! To take something carelessly from the divine realm? Under normal circumstances, there's no way that should be possible! To begin with, a human coming here is already plenty weird!" [Tekun]

Oh yeah…

"I've gone here so many times I forgot." [Ryouma]
"Well, coming is one thing, but humans shouldn't be able to invocate space magic here, you know? I don't understand magic theories, so I don't understand it well, but… It's probably because Gayn's trio called you here from your world, and that had some kind of effect." [Tekun]
"Actually I've been told that often. Is that ok?" [Ryouma]
"Beats me… I'm the God of Wine and Craft. No way I can answer a question like that. That's something you should ask Fer Noevir. If it's him, then he might know something." [Tekun]

Fer Noevir? It's a name I've never heard of before.

"Who's that Fer Noevir?" [Ryouma]
"Oh, you don't know? It's the magic god, Fer Noevir. That guy isolates himself in his own place. And while I don't know what he's doing, he's the most informed when it comes to things related to magic and all sorts of stuff. Only, it's very rare to meet him even as a god myself. I don't know if you'll ever have the chance to meet him." [Tekun]
"I see. Well there's no problem normally anyway, and Gayn's group did tell me that it's not a bad influence. I just wanted to know the reason is all." [Ryouma]
"Well I guess it's normal to think that, since the strange things are happening to you." [Tekun]

As Tekun said that, my surroundings began to illuminate. Isn't it earlier than normal?

"Ah, it's time." [Ryouma]

I quickly drink up the wine, and put back the goblet in my 'Item Box'.

"Ho, so this is what it's like when you're going back." [Tekun]
"Oh, now that you mention it, you weren't here last time so you didn't see, huh? By the way, did you meet up with Gayn's group after that?" [Ryouma]
"Yeah, I caught them while they were going back. They really did go to your world. Next time, I'll have them let me go to the other world!" [Tekun]

Said Tekun as he began to heartily laugh.

"I see, then please drink moder… ah, what am I saying. There's no way the God of Wine would get drunk." [Ryouma]
"Of course! I could drink enough to bathe!" [Tekun]
"Speaking of which, what would happen to the liquor in the world when you do something like that? Will it suddenly disappear?" [Ryouma]
"That won't happen. Whether it's there or here, the things of that world and the things made by god can also be eaten or drunk. Your goblet is the same. As long as you pour magic power into it, liquor will come out. No matter how much you drink, the drinks of other people won't disappear." [Tekun]
"I see, then I'll use it without holding back." [Ryouma]

As I said that, Tekun laughed and said this.

"Exactly. Just enjoy it! Wine's something to be enjoyed after all!" [Tekun]

I tried to reply, but light completely filled the place, and before I knew it I was back at the chapel.

"… Guess I didn't make it. If I pray here, will it reach?" [Ryouma]

Thank you, I'll enjoy myself plenty with your wine here. And I hope you enjoy drinking there as well.

I prayed that prayer, then I left the church after donating.

Now, I guess I'll go to the store. It's a bit late though… After all, it's already past the store's opening time.

As I walked towards the store. I heard the laughter of many people near the store

Somehow I can hear people laughing. Where are their voices coming from…… my store?

It turns out the voices are coming from my shop. Looking at the crowd gathered outside, I noticed that the people were all laughing. What's going on?

Thinking that, I peeked inside the store. There, I saw Li Ling-san knock two men out. What are they doing?

"Good morning, Li Ling-san." [Ryouma]
"Ah, boss. Good morning. I'll just tie these two up, so please wait a moment." [Li Ling]

Li Ling-san quickly tied the two up. During that time, I asked Carm-san who was tending to the store.

"What happened?" [Ryouma]
"It's been quite a while since the last, but those two came here as thugs." [Carm]
"Eh? Then what's up with the people laughing? I'd understand it if they were screaming, but why are they laughing?' [Ryouma]
"Actually…"

Apparently these two guys stained their clothes with something really hard to wash of so they could complain. After all, if the store can't wash it properly, then the store's reputation would drop.

If it was a normal laundromat, then washing it off would certainly have been a problem. However, with the cleaner slimes being able to wash even the filth of a goblin's loincloth, such things are meaningless. But they didn't know that, so the ruffians shouted in a loud voice in front of the curious onlookers. "Look! They can't take the dirt off my clothes!" At the same time, the perfectly clean laundry were spread before them.

Seeing such foolishness, the onlookers couldn't help but begin to laugh. One after another, they began to laugh. And as if it were infectious, before anyone knew it, the entire crowd had already burst into a great laughter. Infuriated, the ruffians tried to act violently, but they were quickly put down by Li Ling-san, and arrested. Right after that is when I entered the store.

Furthermore, those ruffians were handed to the guards for disturbing the shop's operation. The guards apparently passed by the store by chance because they heard the voices of the customers, so like that they were able to take the ruffians away.

Going deep into the store, I called Karla-san and Fei-san to discuss, but in the end we arrived at the same conclusion of just continuing to be on guard. And after deciding to hold a meeting again after we find something else we can do, we ended our discussion.

Oh, I know. Just in case, I should leave the antidotes I made yesterday here.

"These are antidotes which I'd just made yesterday. In the unlikely case where you happen to need it, I'll leave it here." [Ryouma]
"Understood." [Karla]

As I said that, I handed 11 bottles of medicine to Karla-san and Fei-san.

Now, what should I do next? …Isn't there something that I can do to protect the store? Come to think of it, this store's window isn't that robust, huh? …Then, if I were to use that!

In order to put into practice my idea, I went to the abandoned mine.

When I got back to the abandoned mine, I went over to a slightly bigger tunnel and drew 3 magical formations on a big box of stone. After I completed that, I had the sticky slimes spit hardening liquid inside the box.

After finishing that, one of the magic formations was a magic formation of separation. Using that I separated half the water content of the liquid from it. I drained that excess water, and then I had the sticky slimes spit out more hardening liquid into the box that has less volume. Next, with the magic formation of mixing, I combined the two liquids. Then I separated the new liquid from its water contents again, put in even more hardening liquid, mixed it, and then separated its water contents. I repeated this process several more times.

If you're wondering what I'm doing, well I'm making the sticky slime's hardening liquid more concentrated.

When I used alchemy to separate the sticky slime's liquid from its water content and dried it, only a lump of that liquid was left. From the looks of things, that material was the ingredient that gave the sticky liquid or the hardening liquid its properties. When I saw that, I wondered to myself what would happen if I were to concentrate it.

The results were that the hardening liquid became even harder than normal. Normally, if you dried the hardening liquid, with just a little bit of strength it would already start making noises as if it were about to break. But the concentrated material has strength comparable to something strengthened with magic.

I drew two circles with a square inside the magic formation, and shifted it 45 degrees to make it match. This is the magic formation of transformation. Inside that, I placed the lump of concentrated hardening liquid that couldn't be destroyed easily even if I tried to at full power.

If I turn this into a plank, I'll be able to use this as a window glass.

"I wonder why I couldn't think of this until now." [Ryouma]

This concentrated liquid has high transparency. While it's not colorless, it's only slightly tinged with yellow. In fact, you wouldn't even notice it unless you were told. So as long as I turn this into a plank shaped object, I'll be able to use this as glass for the windows.

By the way, the windows of this world are normally made with wood. There're are also window glasses but they're absurdly expensive. Bottles and other wares made with glass are normally created by craftsmen so they're cheap, but the glass used for windows are manufactured with magic, so they're expensive.

While it's also possible to make window glasses with hand-blown glass, it might be because of quality check, but only a handful of skilled craftsmen can make it, making it scarce.

Because the windows are made out of wood, in order to get light to go in, there's no choice but to keep it open. But because of this, it gets quite troublesome when it gets cold and the wind enters. This is something common in the stores of this world.

When I thought I wouldn't be able to acquire window glasses, I checked my 'Architecture' skill, and it turns out it's possible to get one with 1 middle gold coin. But, of course, I wasn't able to pay that amount.

That's why I gave up on it, and made the window with wood just like the other stores.

However, with this concentrated hardening liquid, it'll be possible to use it as a substitute! Moreover, its hardness can prevent crime, and it has extremely strong properties against fire and heat.

And although I'm digressing, the hardness and strength of the concentrated sticky liquid are both fragile. Moreover, on top of not having a muddy color and not being transparent, it burns easily. While the normal dried sticky liquid doesn't burn as much as cloths do, the lump of concentrated sticky liquid burns easily and vigorously. I was surprised to find out that the two liquids were basically opposite each other in properties.

The concentrated hardening liquids were too hard, and the concentrated sticky liquids were brittle, and because I had fire magic, I had no need for fuels, so I left it alone too. Who would've thought that I would be able to use the concentrated hardening liquid like this!

"It might be because I just used my barriers to keep the cold out that I wasn't able to think this up at all." [Ryouma]

Like this, I continued the process while I whispered to myself from time to time. By evening, I was able to make 50 windows of concentrated hardening liquid planks.

Chapter 3

The next day.

I woke up in the morning, did my preparations, and then gathered the slimes. But then I noticed something amiss. What is this slime?

What lay before my eyes was a slime I'd never seen before. However, I knew for sure that I was contracted with it, so I quickly used 'Monster Identify'.

Medicine Slime

Skills

- Generate Liquid Medicine Lv3
- Poison Resistance Lv3
- Disease Resistance Lv5
- Physical Resistance Lv1
- Jump Lv3
- Digestion Lv3
- Split Lv3 Lv1
- Absorption Lv3
- Spear Arts Lv1

Medicine slime? I don't remember taming a slime like this. In that case, did it evolve!?

"But I shouldn't have any more normal slimes left. Moreover, it has the 'Spear Arts' skill… I know!" [Ryouma]

When you think about it, medicine can become poison depending on how you use it. The reverse is also true. Then in that case, it must've evolved from the poison slime!

"No slimes have evolved a second time after evolving until now, so I thought they could only evolve once. But to think that they would actually have a second evolution. But why all of the sudden? Did I fulfill the evolution conditions somewhere?" [Ryouma]

The evolution of a slime is decided by the food they eat. So the medicine slime's evolution condition must be medicine? Something like that, when did I? …Now that I think about it, last night, the spilled medicine was cleaned up by someone right? I thought the cleaner slimes were the ones who cleaned it up, but was it this slime?

In order to confirm my suspicions, I gathered the poison slimes, and poured out a bottle of antidote into a vessel of stone I made before. Right then and there five poison slimes gathered and began to drink.

"Ahh, they're drinking. So it really was the poison slime…" [Ryouma]

The poison slime from before evolved after drinking a bottle. In that case, a simple calculation should mean that five slimes would need five bottles. Having thought that, I gave the poison slimes 4 more bottles.

And while they were drinking, I made several vessels, and then I gave an order to the medicine slime.

"Show me what kind of medicine you can make." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I presented to it the vessels. The medicine slime then proceeded to spit out liquid one after another into the vessels. From silky smooth to sticky, there were all sorts.

I confirmed those one after another and…

Potion
Styptic
Antidote
Poison (Immediate Effect)
Poison (Slow Effect)
Paralysis Poison (Immediate Effect)

Paralysis Poison (Slow Effect)
Antibacterial Medicine

"Oh… it's quite varied. And as expected it can release both medicine and poison. But what's up with this antibacterial medicine?" [Ryouma]

When I used 'Identify' on it, this came out:

Antibacterial Medicine

A liquid generated by the medicine slime that possesses powerful antibacterial properties. When applied, the viruses and bacteria in the area will be sterilized. Unless applied in an airtight container, the water content will immediately evaporate. This liquid is harmless to humans.

Isn't this an antiseptic?! This is perfect! Especially since I was quite worried about going to other regions aside from the Jamil Region hygiene wise.

… I feel like quite a bit of time had passed while I was doing this. I better go to the store now.

I headed towards the town after I gathered the slime in a panic. However, the store was already open by the time I got there. I entered the store through the employee's door, and met up with Carm-san.

"Good morning, Boss." [Carm]
"Good morning, Carm-san." {Ryouma}
"Boss, has something been happening lately?" [Carm]
"Eh? What do you mean?" [Ryouma]
"Until now you've been coming to the store before opening, but yesterday and today, you came here late. So I was wondering if something was happening." [Carm]
"Ahh… there's no problem. I've just been caught up in my own things is all." [Ryouma]
"Really? If so, then that's fine. But if something were up, then please don't hesitate to discuss it with us." [Carm]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]
"Also, since you're here and all, I'd like to ask you to be here at this time from now on." [Carm]

At this time?

"Why is that?" [Ryouma]
"If you come here early, you'll definitely do the store's preparations yourself, causing the people below to have no work left. It's practice for the newcomers, so please get used to leaving the work to other people." {Carm}

So I was stealing their work?

"I see, then in that case it can't be helped." [Ryouma]

I understand the reason given, but thanks to this I'll have even less work to do… Ah, speaking of which, I need to talk about the windows.

"Carm-san, are Fei-san and Li Ling-san free right now?" [Ryouma]
"Fei-san is tending to the store right now, but Li Ling-san should be in the break room. Is there something you need from them?" [Carm]
"It's about the store's crime prevention. I thought of something, so I wanted to hear their opinion." [Ryouma]
"I see. Then please wait at the office, I'll call her now." [Carm]

Right after I got to the office, Carm-san and Li Ling-san also came. They were at the door right next, so of course they'd come that fast. Or rather, it would have been fine if I just went there myself instead.

"Good morning, boss. I heard you had business with me." [Li Ling]
"Good morning, Li Ling-san. Regarding the windows of the store, they're quite easy to break into, right?" [Ryouma]
"Yes. As long as one brought a hammer or an axe, it's easy enough for anyone to break in. We'd already thought of that, so we're keeping an eye on it too." [Li Ling]
"Thanks as always. In any case, I figured if the windows were indestructible it'd make life easier for you guys." [Ryouma]
"Well, that's true. But how?" [Li Ling]

I took out one of the concentrated sticky liquid planks I'd made the previous day from my 'Dimension Home'. When Carm-san saw that, his gaze changed.

"Is that a window glass?" [Carm]
"It's a little different." [Ryouma]
"But that shape and that transparency… I really can't see it as anything else. No, even if it's not a window glass, we can definitely use this as an alternative! Boss, did you make this?" [Carm]

He's enthusiastic about that, huh? Well it's true that I plan to use these planks as an alternative for window glasses, but I don't have any intention to sell these right now.

"Sorry to disappoint you, but I'm not planning to sell these right now. Besides, the production rate is also insufficient." [Ryouma]
"I see… sorry." [Carm]
"Don't mind it. Besides, just like you said, I'm certainly planning to use these planks as an alternative to window glasses. And while it looks similar to a glass, it's resilience is on a different level." [Ryouma]

I hit the glass with my hand to prove to them its resilience.

When Li Ling-san saw that her eyes narrowed.

"Boss, do you mind if I try that too?" [Li Ling]
"No problem, here. I have some spare, so it's fine even if you break it." [Ryouma]

Li Ling-san hit the plank with her fist several times. But despite that, the plank remained unperturbed. Afterwards, she used strengthening magic, but at most, all she was able to do was crack it a bit.

"… It's tough alright. If we install this on the first floor, the assailants will definitely have a hard time breaking in. But in the case we were to be cornered, we also won't be able to break the windows and escape. Because of that we'll also have to be careful." [Li Ling]

So it had that kind of demerit!

"That's true…"
"It's certainly a good idea to have these installed to defend against assailants. Moreover, if all the windows of the store were to be replaced by these, then we'll be able to focus on the lodging even during the night where there's no people." [Li Ling]
"I see. Then it's fine if I replace all of the windows with these, right?" [Ryouma]
"Yes, thank you very much." [Li Ling]

Like this, I began the replacement of the windows of the store from wood to these concentrated hardening liquid planks.

I'll start from behind the store where there're no customers. Then, from there I'll work my way towards the side facing the neighboring stores, then to the side facing the road, until finally, the front of the store that's facing the residential district… Is what I was thinking, when all of the sudden I heard an angry voice.

"What did you do to my laundry!? Does this store tear its customers' clothes?" [Someone]

I quickly hurried to the store's entrance. When I got there, I saw an ill-bred man quarreling with Fina-san as Fei-san interjected.

On top of the counter lay a shirt, torn from its collar all the way down. However, the cleaner slimes can't tear clothes apart from using too much power like you'd get when washing by hand.

Even though it's a false accusation it still doesn't feel good. And even though this is better than a legit claim, I still won't allow this slander.

If I recall correctly, the most important part in order to handle these kind of situations according to my previous life is to have a firm attitude. Of course, there's a difference between the real thing and theory.

Still, I guess I'll show them some proof… I am after all the boss of this store, so there's no way I could just stand here and watch.

I called out to the clamoring man.

"May I know what the problem is?" [Ryouma]
"Boss?" [Fei]

Fei-san was the first to react. I gave a fleeting glance at the man to let Fei-san know that I'll handle this one today. Seeming to have understood, he let me go while keeping an eye out on the man.

"Haaah!? What's with the brat!? Get lost!" [Man]
"That's not possible, since I'm the boss of this store. Is there something unsatisfactory with our store's service?" [Ryouma]

The man's eyebrow twitched when he heard that, and this time he quarreled with me.

"Oh? Well your fucking store screwed me over! Look! My only good suit's been torn apart! Your shit store better compensate me for this!" [Man]
"If you don't mind, I'd like to take a look at that." [Ryouma]

I took the cloth, and examined it. It's important that I put on a good show of properly listening to the claim, otherwise, it'll be bad for the store's image. Although I don't care about what this rascal thinks, there are some onlookers watching, so I need to make a good impression.

Hmm… looks like this torn shirt's been cut with a knife, and then torn from there. If it was washed by hand, then it might have been torn, but that's not possible with the cleaner slimes. This is clearly a false accusation.

It's impossible for my cleaner slimes to cause this tear. Even if it is a false accusation, isn't this too lacking? I clearly explained that the slimes were the ones washing the clothes on the store's opening day! If you're going to falsely accuse my store, then you should've at least brought a shirt, claiming it melted!

"I'll be troubled if you bring this kind of false accusation, customer." [Ryouma]

I said as I looked at the man head-on.

"Haah!? False accusation!? Me? Wasn't it your store that tore this up!? And instead of apologizing you're actually accusing me!? What a store! This fucking corrupt merchant!!" [Man]

Yelled the man in a loud voice to let the onlookers surrounding us hear. In response to that, I said this.

"Then, shall I show you proof?" [Ryouma]
"Aah?" [Man]

"Please wait a moment. I will show everyone here how the store washes its laundry. After everyone sees it, you should all come to understand that this kind of thing is impossible." [Ryouma]

I left that place to Fei-san for a moment as I went to get a cleaner slime.

"Now, I did say that I will be exhibiting the store's method on washing clothes, but for that I'll need something to wash. Is there anyone amongst you who would volunteer to lend me his laundry? In exchange I will wash it for free." [Ryouma]

At those words, voices rose here and there.

"Then, to the person over there, thank you very much." [Ryouma]

One of the male customers lent me his bag of laundry, and I took out its contents and put it over the counter. A bloodstained pair of pants and shirt. They were normal clothes, but considering that the man was also built tough, he's probably an adventurer.

"Please observe." [Ryouma]

I ordered the cleaner slime to wash it. The cleaner slime washed it as usual, and even the bloodstain was removed, making the clothes good as new. Seeing that, the onlookers couldn't help but let out voices of surprise. The clothes were fully washed in only 10 seconds.

"What do you think? This is how we wash your clothes. And naturally, because of this there also isn't any way for there to be a situation like yours." [Ryouma]
"T-That's…" [Man]
"If you want to say it's a fluke, then I'll entertain you as much as you want, and show it to you again." {Ryouma}

After that, I washed 20 more people's worth of clothes, and the man was no longer able to say anything.

"To begin with, do you think that a slime could cause this kind of tear? The slimes don't have nails or fangs to cut a cloth like this. Moreover, they don't have the strength. And by the way, the slimes of this store eat only the filth sticking to the clothes. So there's no way for them to make the kind of mistake you might see in a normal laundromat. And so, there's no way for them to tear your shirt.

In fact, I've already been using this method to have my laundry washed, and not once have I had my clothes torn. That's why I have full confidence that there's no way the store could have caused this kind of tear." [Ryouma]

When the people around me heard this, everyone but the ruffian was convinced. On top of me not having any clumsiness, it was also important to give the customers a good impression. And now that everyone was already convinced, there's no longer any need for me to mind the ruffian.

"Now, since you're going to be quite a nuisance to the store' operation, I'll have to hand you over to the guards. Could you please behave yourself as I hand you over to them?" [Ryouma]
"Tch!! Don't fuck with me!" [Man]

The man came rushing at me as he said that. But in response, I twisted his body, took his arm, and threw him. Naturally, I threw him to a place where the other onlookers won't get caught up. As the man fell, a sharp noise echoed.

Then, I rushed over to the fallen man and stomped on his throat.

"Goha! Kahi! Gek… ha!" [Man]

Having been thrown and stomped on, the man felt not only pain, but also found difficulty in breathing.

"It's only self-defense. There's no injury too, only pain, so there's no problem." [Ryouma]

With so many eyes here, there's no way I could beat this ruffian too much, so I'll leave it here. After the man was subdued, we called the guards over and handed him to them. With that, this case was concluded.

"Boss, Fei-san, thank you very much." [Fina]
"I didn't do anything this time, you know? The one who did all the work was the boss." [Fei]
"Well I am the boss after all, I have to act properly when a guy like that comes while I'm here." [Ryouma]
"Boss you're also quite strong, huh~" [Jeanne]
"But boss, was it ok to wash those clothes for free?" [Fei]
"This much isn't a problem. Besides, what's important is that I was able to properly let the onlookers know that the ruffian's claim was nothing but false accusation. Otherwise, they would've thought that we were the ones wrong, and our profits would take a hit." [Ryouma]
"I see. That's certainly true." [Karla]

Agreed Karla-san.

"But still, please tell us beforehand if you're going to do something like that. I was so nervous, you know?" [Karla]
"After all, we hadn't any idea that you were so strong." [Carm]

Oh, I forgot about it, but from the outside I'm an 11 year old kid… I tend to forgot this kind of stuff from time to time.

They knew that I could use magic, but since I couldn't really use offensive magic much while in the town or in the store, they were worried. And I also haven't had the opportunity to show them my strength.

"Sorry, I forgot to tell you." [Ryouma]

Reporting, contacting, and consultation! These things are important!

Although this kind of stuff happened, I was able to finish replacing all the windows with my concentrated hardening liquid plank safely.

Just a little bit before dusk, I went over to Serge-san's. There's also the medicine slime, but it's mostly since I

had to buy some bottles for the medicine and some tools.

"Welcome, Ryouma-sama." [Serge]
"Hello, Serge-san. I came here today to buy things for myself." [Ryouma]
"What are you looking for?" [Serge]
"I'd like to purchase a large number of bottles to put medicine in." [Ryouma]
"I understand. However, a large number?" [Serge]
"Yes. Actually, I studied medicine under my grandmother, and now that I have some time, I'd like to practice it. After all, adventurer work is quite dangerous, so it's also to prepare for it." [Ryouma]
"I see, but still… If you're going to purchase a large amount of medicine bottles, then you should register as a pharmacy to the merchant guild. Moreover, if you purchase through them, you'll be able to get the bottles cheaper." [Serge]

Now that he mentions it…

In the end, I wasn't able to buy a medicine bottle from Serge's. And since I had some spare time, I told him I'd treat some extra cloths instead.

After that I went to the merchant guild, and the guild master greeted me at the guest room.

"What do you need? More people again?" [Grisela]
"No, today's for something else." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I explained.

"I see, so you want to buy some bottles for your medicine… Exactly, how skilled are you?" [Grisela]

Having been asked that, I took out the antidote I made the day before yesterday. The guild master took the bottle, used 'Identify', and then she burst into a laughter.

"Not bad, not bad. This is more than good enough to be sold. With this you could even open up a pharmacy. So, how about it?" [Grisela]
"I don't plan to right now." [Ryouma]
"After all, it's more than enough if you start your branch store like this. It's also important for you to have a craft just in case something happens. And in the case your money is insufficient to start a branch store, won't it be a good idea to have a sideline? Or if you want, I could buy these from you." [Grisela]
"Is that ok?" [Ryouma]
"It's fine, after all I'm expecting all sorts from you. Moreover, I specialized in medicine before I reached this position, you know? The quality of this medicine is good, so as long as I use my connections, I'll be able to sell as much as I want." [Grisela]

Eh? So the guild master was a medicinal specialist?

"Thank you very much. I'll be counting on you then, when the opportunity comes." [Ryouma]

I gave my thanks to the guild master, and purchased a large number of medicinal bottles, along with pots, funnels, and other medical tools. And since I was already here in town, I decided to buy some food too before heading towards the abandoned mine.

Afterwards, I went back home without using magic and just running, since the sun was still up. Along the way, I passed by several other adventurers. I guess they're going back from grell frog hunting.

As I ran while thinking that, the stench of the mud of the swamp wafted to my nose, and I thought of something. Back when I cleaned the latrine pits, didn't I use a cloth treated with the deodorization liquid to deal with the stench? In that case, wouldn't deodorization liquid sell quite a bit? After all, there were deodorants back in my world. Yeah, I'll discuss it with Carm-san and the others tomorrow.

When I got to the mine, I made some supper quick, ate, and then passed the night examining the medicine slime's antibacterial liquid.

I got a bit too into it, and I lost track of the time again. Thanks to that I'll be sleeping late, but that aside, I was able to confirm that the five poison slimes who drank the antidotes this morning had also turned into medicine slimes. Since it's like this, does this mean that the other slimes also have another evolution? … The

slimes' possibilities seem to go on endlessly.

After I calmed myself from confirming that the slimes had evolved, I drank from the goblet I got from Tekun. Then I thought of something.

"I know I shouldn't be complaining since I got this from someone else, but still… Isn't this a bit too inefficient?" [Ryouma]

Wine came out of the goblet just as Tekun had mentioned, but… I only drank once, and yet, I'd already consumed nearly 30,000 points of magic power. I confirmed it with my status board, so there's no mistake. Even if I used up all of my magic power, I still wouldn't be able to drink more than 6 times… Or wait, maybe 6 is quite a lot since for an evening drink. How should it normally be anyway? Hmm… then again, since I'm making something out of nothing, it might be a given that the magic power consumption is high. And the amount is also dependent on what I want.

… I don't really know much about the proper amount though, since I haven't been able to get a lot of opportunity to drink other than the socializing I had to do in my previous life. In any case, I'll drink two glasses, then I'll call it a day.

So I drank from the goblet, and then I went to sleep. The wine was delicious today as well, but it was disappointing that I forgot to prepare some snacks again too. I'll make sure not to forget it next time.

Chapter 4

It's been a month since I parted with the Jamil Household.

In the past month I've finished building my house, I've furnished the tunnels with other facilities on top of the storage room and the alchemy room, and I've also made a 2 story house that will serve as a guest room along with a reception room in front of the tunnel. I also created a garden and a field of medicinal plants using wood magic along with soil from the forest and the scavenger slime's fertilizer. Finally, it's starting to look like a house.

In my free time, I was also finally able to spare some time to investigate Melzen's spear. A magic weapon is able to invocate magic whenever magic power is poured into it. Melzen's spear is able to use the two spells, "Ignition", and "Fire Ball". When I brought the spear to Tigger's Armory before, I found out that there were two kinds of magic weapons. The basic one could use only one, but the ones that could invocate several magic can only be created by a skilled artisan. In other words, Melzen's Spear is the work of a skilled artisan.

I also found out after testing the weapon, that putting more magic power into the spear doesn't affect its damage output. The strength of the magic seems to have been set. Moreover, while it's possible to pour any attribute of magic power into the spear, using a similar attribute to the magic being invoked will cost less magic power.

The most efficient attribute for Melzen's Spear is fire. Next is neutral. Aside from those two, everything else is mostly the same, but they're all inefficient.

… Honestly speaking though, this isn't really all that interesting… Like alchemy, I could just use 'Flame' or 'Fire Ball' by willing magic power and using the spells, so it's not particularly useful for someone like me who can use fire magic.

It's convenient when fighting against ghosts and magical beasts that are weak to fire, but aside from that it's just a spear that can shoot out fire. It's the kind of weapon fit for someone who can't use fire magic.

The spear also seems to have been made with an expensive material called, Flame Ore. It's probably because it shoots out fire. A normal iron wouldn't last, so the craftsman must've used this to keep that from happening. And because of this, it's a first-class spear. So even though the fire magic isn't that useful, I can still use it. Still though, it's kind of hard to come to grips with the fact that its enchantment is just an added value.

As for the store, the ruffians have started coming nearly every day since a few days ago, but since dealing with them is easy, the store is doing quite well. Especially since my proposal to sell the cleaner slime's deodorizing liquid has had a bigger effect than I expected, and was a big hit amongst the beastmen and the dragon newts. Nowadays it has spread even amongst the normal customers, and you can see a large number of people coming to the store every day to buy some.

I do wonder if the supply will match the demand once it starts to rise though. So I discussed with Caulkins-san and the others whether I should get the scavenger slimes to help as well. But in the end we decided that the cleaner slimes alone are enough.

Speaking of which, the cleaner slimes now number a hundred and twenty-three. They've been washing clothes every day, so after their split, they ended up this many. With this many cleaner slimes as long as there's food and water for them, there shouldn't be any problem spitting out more deodorizing liquid. In other words as long as they have enough laundry water to drink, then they'll be able to produce deodorizing liquid. They use some of their nutrients in order to make the deodorizing liquid, so their splits have become slower compared to before. But even then, it's still a level faster than back in the forest, so there's no problem in particular.

The cleaner slimes also seem to have become better at handling their deodorizing liquid, and they can now produce over twice the amount of diluted deodorizing liquid in their bodies. Right now, they have three ratios of concentration that can be used.

First, there's the normal liquid, which is good enough to deal with the bad odor from sweat or other things that one would normally get in one's day-to-day life. Then there's the super liquid that can deal with the things that the normal liquid can't deal with like the armor of the adventurers that have become stuffy because of sweat, or the smell of blood or beasts. And if that's not good enough, then there's the hyper or undiluted liquid.
If that's not good enough, then there's no choice but to give up. I've never seen it fail yet, though.

The cleaner slimes were doing just fine, but I still wanted to reduce their burden, so I researched on whether or not it was possible to make a dilution with Caulkins-san. Unfortunately, we couldn't find a method to create one by ourselves. We tried mixing the deodorizing liquid with water, but for some reason it lost its effect. The slimes, themselves, are diluting the liquid inside their body with the water they drink, and yet… I wonder what it is that we're doing different.

I also found something interesting. When I used 'Sensory Link' on the cleaner slimes as I made them work, I found out that they neither became mentally or physically tired. So as long as they had enough food and water, they will apparently be able to make as many deodorizing liquid as I ask them to. And when I checked the other slimes, they too didn't suffer from fatigue.

But I still think it's too much to make them work the entire day every day, so I limited their production to mornings and afternoons every day. This much is more than enough to respond to the demand anyway, so it's fine. And I better continue the research regarding the deodorizing liquid. At any rate, after we got the deodorizing liquid from the slimes, we bottled and stocked them in the store's cellar before selling them.

I don't understand the slime's mind and body very well, but there's no other way to describe it other than amazing. And although they're more resilient than me or anyone else, they're not completely immune to it. Really, I wonder what's going in a slime's body… I guess I'll ask Caulkins-san and the others about it later.

"Good work today, everyone." [Ryouma]
"Thanks for today, boss!" [Everyone else]

We managed to complete today's work without any trouble again. Although I haven't been able to come here to close the store, because I've been living at the abandoned mine, I'm here today. Why? Because from now on I'm going to get chummy with the new hires! Putting it bluntly, I just want to talk about the slimes, but they're interested in it anyway, so isn't it fine?

I went to the break room along with Caulkins-san, Tony-san, and Robelia-san, while everyone else went back to their own rooms.

"Well it's already been a month since I've hired you three. How is it?" [Ryouma]
"This is the best place I've ever worked at." [Tony]
"We're treated well, and at the same time we're able to do a job that's worth doing." [Robelia]
"And more than anything, it's a wonderful thing to see slimes raking in profit!" [Caulkins]

The other 2 nodded at Caulkins-san's word.

"It's a kind of happiness that I didn't get to taste back when I was at the research lab." [Tony]
"It can't be helped though, after all, the slime research lab back then was a place with no future and reeked of despair." [Robelia]
"Despair, huh?" [Ryouma]
"Boss, you might think it's too much, but that's because you haven't seen the misery of the researchers that have been made to work at the slime research lab. Although slime researchers have a somewhat better lifestyle than those from the slimes, they're treated worse than slaves." [Caulkins]
"Really!?" [Ryouma]

Seriously!? It's a research lab, so I thought they would at least… No, that's wrong. There are definitely places that treat people cruelly. Even in my previous world that had the labor standards act, there were still companies that abused their employees. It's because of companies like those that the term 'slave' became widespread.

"When it's been decided that a researcher will be sent to slime research, half the time the researchers will instead choose to retire and leave." [Caulkins]
"Slime research has become a place where people are sent to in order to be driven out of the company. So it's only a given that the treatment would be poor. Even the master of a slave would have some sort of duty to ensure that their slaves would be able to live to some extent, but slime researchers are just paid their salaries without any assurance on how they will be living." [Robelia]
"And while it's true that you'll get paid, it's cheap, so it's not possible to live luxuriously. Moreover, they'll cut your salary for the pettiest things, making your life a living hell." [Tony]

So the slaves of this world has some kind of assurance for their lifestyle… Unexpectedly, it would appear that the slaves of this world and the corporate slaves of my world find little difference in whether they have a collar attached or not.

"What kind of petty things?" [Ryouma]
"The most common one is not being able to bring out results." [Robelia]
"The goals of slime research are the slime's ecology and the method of taming a big slime, but that's something that hasn't been answered for over 300 years already." [Caulkins]
"It's precisely because it's that kind of research that they're using it to demote people." [Tony]

… I figured it out by myself, but… could it be that I've actually done something amazing?

"Why couldn't you figure out the slime's ecology?" [Ryouma]
"Well first of all, the slime's living grounds are too vast, and the number of variations the slimes have are far too many. The place they're living, the environment, and their strength. Building a hypothesis from all these is important, but because there's too variations, there's definitely one of them that'll be an exception." [Caulkins]

"Moreover, the information is just not sufficient to make a hypothesis. When researching other magical beasts, we dissect them in order to understand more. For example, just from seeing the shape of teeth it's possible to make a conjecture on whether it's a herbivore or a carnivore. But when slime's die, the only thing they leave behind is their nucleus, so we can't dissect them. And there's also no point in dissecting their body since they're transparent to begin with. As for the nucleus it's brittle, so although it might have some sort of function as an organ, we don't know. In the end we don't know anything about their mode of life." [Robelia]

Come to think of it, slimes do disappear when they die… Before I started taming them, I killed a lot of slimes, and each time they'd only leave behind their nucleus while the rest of their body disappeared. At the start I thought that was just how this world worked. Things would die, and without leaving a trace, just leave behind their loot. But then the other magical beasts didn't disappear after dying… Then again, if you can't take apart the beasts after killing them, then it won't be possible to get meat or other ingredients. I did think it was strange, but I was too caught up in the evolutions, so I just let it pass

"When we were researching the slimes, there were plenty of times when they evolved into a different slime, but we couldn't figure out the evolution conditions." [Tony]

Eh? The slimes evolved, but you couldn't figure out the conditions?

"What kind of slime did they evolve into?" [Ryouma]
"There were all sorts. The slimes evolved into a different one nearly every day." [Robelia]

Said Robelia-san as she held her head and let out a breath of sigh. I wonder if something happened… Well I guess I'll let it be. That aside, what's going on? What were they feeding the slimes?

"What did you feed the slimes?" [Ryouma]
"Feed? Well we just fed it whatever we could get our hands on… right?" [Robelia]

Said Robelia-san as she asked the other two for confirmation. Tony and Caulkins-san nodded.

"We barely had any funding for our slime research, so we couldn't feed the slimes anything special. So instead we just fed it the leftover feeds that other researchers fed their magical beasts. We didn't really have much of a choice, since even our salaries were only barely enough to let us live. So we just fed the slimes with whatever was available.

There were also researchers who would steal the feed of the slimes when it was meat, so there were very few researchers who would pay out of their own pocket to get the slimes good feed." [Robelia]
"The slimes would eat whatever you gave it, so we took that as proof that it was fine to feed it anything. After all, slimes are magical beasts that can even live off the food in completely different environments. Such an adaptable magical beast would definitely be fine eating anything." [Tony]

I couldn't keep my jaw from falling when I heard Robelia-san's and Tony-san's explanation.

You're kidding, right? It's true that slimes can eat anything if you order it to… but still… Then again, it's not like I don't understand the reason. But at the same time, it's precisely because you fed it randomly that the slimes evolved randomly. And because of that you couldn't figure out the importance of feeds to slimes, and you even failed to grasp the evolution conditions as a result. Man, assumptions are scary.

As I thought that, I couldn't help but unconsciously hold my head. When I brought my head up, the other three were looking at me.

"Boss, what's the matter all of the sudden?" [Rbelia]
"No, it's just…" [Ryouma]

Well, alright… Now what? Should I just drop the bomb at their face?

"Actually, the evolution condition for the slimes lie in the feed." [Ryouma]
"Eh?" [Robelia]
"……" [Tony]
"What do you mean?" [Caulkins]
"I said the slimes evolve depending on what you feed them." [Ryouma]

I explained to them my findings from back in the forest, and all the evolution conditions of the slimes I have with me now. The three were dumbfounded.

"N-No way…" [Robelia]
"To think that our theory was actually wrong… And to think that very thing was actually the evolution condition…" [Tony]

As Robelia-san and Tony-san muttered that, they held their heads in depression. Huh? Caulkins-san is actually being quiet…!?

Caulkins-san!?" [Ryouma]

Caulkins-san stood their quietly with his head hung in shame. Then all of the sudden, he started crying without letting out his voice! What's going!?

"Boss…" [Caulkins]
"Y-Yes?" [Ryouma]

Caulkins-san suddenly began to quietly speak.

"You're explanation, I get it. Actually, when I was working at the lab, my research was about how to evolve a slime into a big slime. Big slimes in general lived in places with strong magical beasts, so my hypothesis was that if I fed a slime the meat of strong magical beasts, then it would eventually turn into a big slime. No one else was able to bring results, so I focused my attention on something different." [Caulkins]

So they thought big slime was a slime evolution. It's unfortunate that Caulkins-san wasn't able to see the importance of feed, but he still got quite close.

"Just as Robelia had mentioned a while ago, the researchers themselves already have their hands full just trying to feed themselves, so it wasn't possible to feed the slimes with the meat of strong magical beasts. But I had some leeway since I was a noble."

A slime that's eaten nothing but the meat of strong magical beasts? I wonder what kind of slime it'll be.

"After a while the slime evolved. But it didn't turn into a big slime, instead it turned into a meat slime." [Caulkins]
"Meat Slime? Eh? You mean… meat as in meat?" [Ryouma]
"Right, but…" [Caulkins]

Caulkins suddenly stopped talking, and he bit his lips.

"It wasn't only the feeds that were meat, even the slime's body was meat." [Caulkins]
"Even the body?" [Ryouma]

What's that supposed to mean?

"The slime turned into something that looked like a wriggling lump of raw meat.." [Caulkins]
"Wriggling raw meat…" [Ryouma]

Uwaah… That sounds disgusting…

"I think you might have figured it out already, but it was ludicrously eerie… I was fired right after that. I'd completely used up all my fortune by the time I was fired, and I've even had my properties seized, so I wasn't able to run any more tests. If your evolution conditions are correct, then that would explain why my slime turned into a meat slime. That's why I understand… Saying it now might not make a difference, but I wish I had known earlier. If only I had continued that research! It's so vexing to know that I was so close!" [Caulkins]

Caulkins-san began to tear up again as he said that.

That's certainly frustrating. If only he was able to continue researching a bit more, then he might have been able to uncover one of the slime's mode of life… Come to think of it, when I met him for the first time, Jeff-san told me that he spent all his fortune in his research. So this is the reason, huh? When he's in charge of a store, I'll definitely have someone else who can manage money work with him.

"I-Isn't it fine, Caulkins-san!? After all, we're already working at this store!" [Robelia]
"That's right! From now on we'll be able to work under the boss, and make other people understand how useful slimes are!" [Tony]
"You're right… you're exactly right! I don't have time to regret! I'll use this to make myself work even harder!" [Caulkins]

Looks like Robelia-san and Tony-san were able to help Caulkins-san get back up. It's good that he's even more fired up than before… and more than anything, it's good that he's not the type to be sour. Only, I do know how to make the slime into a big slime. But if I tell him now, I'm sure he'll be depressed again…

I don't have the skills to tell him about it without causing him to be depressed, so I better just keep it to myself for now.

"Oh yeah, what were we talking about again?" [Caulkins]
"We were explaining to the boss about how the lab treated us poorly." [Robelia]
"And then from there we got to the evolution conditions. Boss, do you still have any other questions?" [Tony]

Questions? In that case, the slime variations.

"What kind of slimes were there in the research lab?" [Ryouma]
"In my research lab, the type of slime I've seen is the same type as the boss is raising, a sticky slime. My lab's hypothesis believes that slimes will evolve into a big slime when they become stronger, so we caught a bunch of slimes and made them fight other magical beasts. The slimes kept dying, so it was very rare for them to evolve." [Tony]

Well yeah, they won't evolve like that.

"As for me, the slimes we were raising evolved into a slime called, Tree Slime." [Robelia]

Oh! A new slime!

"What kind of slime was that?" [Ryouma]
"It was the same as a normal slime at the start, but as time passed, a tree sprouted from its nucleus." [Robelia]

A tree grew from its nucleus? Is the nucleus of a tree slime a seed?

"And then?" [Ryouma]
"That's it." [Robelia]
"Eh?" [Ryouma]
"The tree grew bigger and bigger, and eventually it rooted itself on the ground. At that point, it just became a normal tree. There's a nucleus inside the tree, so it seems to be alive, but it's become completely unable to move." [Robelia]
"Isn't there some sort of practical application for it?" [Ryouma]
"Nothing in parti… Well I guess you could say it's quite strong, so as lumber, perhaps." [Robelia]

Lumber, huh?

"You know, Boss. It's actually quite rare to find slimes that are as useful in day-to-day life like yours. At most there's the sticky slime, whose sticky liquid is used as glue." [Tony]
"But since it's fine to use a normal glue or paste, there's not a whole lot of demand for the sticky slime's adhesive." [Robelia]
"Evolved slimes aren't really a target of research at the lab, so they're being treated as failures." [Tony]

Doesn't seem like there's any passion or love amongst researchers regarding slimes. I guess they don't feel like researching much, since they're treated poorly, and it doesn't look like there's any future in slimes. But I still think it's a bit too cruel… Then, should I seriously start to popularize the slime's usefulness? Yeah, I'll consider this as one of my goals in this world.

After that, the three told me all about the slimes they had confirmed until now, the variations, the features,

and the population distribution of the slimes.

Incidentally, I also asked them at the last moment about the importance of my research. Apparently, it would depend on how much information I release.

If I publicize the information on the slimes' evolution conditions, then research on it might progress. But with just that, the only ones who'll find it interesting are the slime researchers.

But if I were to mix that along with the cleaner slimes' and the scavenger slimes' ability, then it might make a huge commotion when people start to realize the value of the slimes. But that situation might cause the current slime researchers to be at a disadvantage.

The slime researchers today are all generally people who have been demoted. Once people understand the value of slime, there's no way they'll be allowed to continue to work on it. Instead they'll probably be fired or be demoted to do something else. Or so anticipated the three.

… Eh? Could it be that I was on the verge of causing mass layoffs? I should keep this moment in mind. It's probably not going to happen anytime soon, but in the unlikely case, I could pick up some unemployed people. Provided they're trustworthy, I'll be able to secure more manpower too.

I ended up thinking about all sorts of things, today.

Chapter 5

It's been two months since I've parted with the Jamil Household.

Around the time when the sun had set, and the sky darkened, the screams and angry voices of men can be heard coming from a corner of the Town of Gimuru. Those voices came from the men who attacked Ryouma, but was quickly subdued by Ryouma's counterattack.

"Run! We can't win!" [Ruffian Boss]
"This brat – gyaaa!!!" [Lackey 1]
"Guga!?" [Lackey 2]
"Ku…" [Lackey 3]
"Morons! Didn't I tell you to run?!" [Ruffian Boss]

One of the assailants, sensing they couldn't win, told the other three men to run. However, the three men, whose leader had not yet fallen, ignored their leader's order in their rage, and they went after Ryouma. As a result, their arms were broken, their legs crushed, their chins smashed, and their consciousness taken.

"W-Wait! We surrender! We won't get in your way anymore!" [Ruffian Boss]
"I am truly sorry, however, I no longer have any intentions of listening to such excuses. People like you have recently increased, so if I let you off with an apology, my troubles will never end." [Ryouma]
"No… Gek…" [Ruffian Boss]

In a flash, Ryouma had knocked the man out.

"And case closed." [Ryouma]

As Ryouma looked around him, it could be seen that there were already 13 men lying around him, groaning. Their limbs crushed.

"Seriously, how long is this going to continue for?" [Ryouma]

A few seconds after Ryouma had whispered that, four men ran towards him from a distance. These four men are all guards of the Town of Gimuru.

"What's with all the commotion!? – Is what I'd normally ask, but as expected, it's you, huh, Ryouma? I won't ask anymore, are these today's criminals?" [Guard 1]
"Yes. Thank you as always." [Ryouma]
"Yeah. Tie up the ones who aren't injured much! As for the injured ones… are you going to do it today as well?" [Guard 1]
"Yes." [Ryouma]
"Then do it quickly." [Guard 1]

Ryouma took out a heal slime, and together with it, he used 'High Heal' on the limbs of the ruffians. Under the power of healing magic, the broken bones were quickly healed. As soon as the healing completed, Ryouma handed over the criminals to the guards.

"7 people… adding them up, that totals to 12 bones… It'll be quite costly again." [Guard 1]
"A 'High Heal' goes for 1,000 suits per cast. It takes 6 casts to heal a bone, so with 12 bones, that will total to 72,000 suits. As service, I'll shave it a bit, and settle for 70,000 suits." [Ryouma]

The man's face stiffened.

"I know it's needed, but it's still terrifying." [Guard 1]
"The ruffians have decreased quite a bit since I've started doing this, but there's still quite a few coming… If these sorts weren't around, I wouldn't want to do this either…" [Ryouma]
"At any rate, I'll have you come to the guardhouse first. After all, we need to pay you." [Guard 1]
"Alright." [Ryouma]

Recently, Ryouma has been the target of some ruffians. It was as if they were waiting for the Jamil Household to leave. And the day right after the Jamil Household had managed to return home, the ruffians' activities suddenly started to increase tremendously. Ruffians like these ones have been coming quite frequently since a month ago.

When the ruffians came to realize how difficult it was to find fault with the store, they started fabricating and spreading ill rumors. However, with the store's steadily built-up reputation, along with the help of Grisela and Serge, the rumors were quickly put to rest. Having realized that not even their fabricated rumors had taken effect, the ruffians finally decided to do things directly.

Since then, a lot of ruffians attacked the store at night, while others tried to ambush Ryouma. But with the slimes, Fei, Li Ling, and Ryouma all working together, the ruffians were unable to win. As for the damages – such as when the ruffians tried to forcefully push their way into the store – it was only on the level that could easily be fixed with some materials and magic.

Of course, those expenses were more or less covered by the guards after the criminals were caught. Moreover, since right from the start Ryouma had used magic to build the store, the damages were fixed at little to no cost, causing the compensation to become a part of the day's profit instead.

Speaking of which, the ruffians who broke the buildings were made to pay the repair expenses. When they didn't have enough money to cover the bill, the guards covered it for them in advance. Of course, this isn't free, but an advance. So the guards made the ruffians work as punishment until they were able to pay it back.

A lot of the ruffians have been caught since they started attacking, but they still didn't give up despite having no other choice left but violence. Because of that, Ryouma has been the target of their attacks nearly every day. In response to this, Grisela, Serge, and even Wogan huddled together to discuss the issue. They then decided that all the assailants who have been injured or poisoned by the poison slime will have to receive treatment from the heal slime or an antidote, causing them to have a long list of medical expenses. With this, the risks will be higher, and the assailants will now have to think twice before attacking. This is something they decided after taking into account Ryouma's strength and the store's defense.

In this world, it's legal to injure your assailants provided that it's under the pretext of self-defense. That's why the ruffians can't complain. In fact no one would complain even if they were left alone after being injured. But if you do heal them, then you'll have the right to demand payment from them for the medical bill afterwards. Beating someone up, and then charging them medical bills? No matter how you look at it, this is clearly extortion. However, since it's self-defense, it's still barely legal according to the laws of this world.

Ryouma wasn't happy with this kind of method, but while the current situation wasn't a problem for Ryouma, at the rate it was going it would eventually become dangerous for the employees except for Li Ling and Fei, so Ryouma had no choice but to agree.

As a result, Ryouma has been plucking apart the ruffians who have either attacked him or the store. And right after incapacitating them, Ryouma would then heal the ruffians, and then push a huge medical bill on to them. Thanks to this, a rumor started to circulate amongst the ruffians that a legal but ludicrously high medical bill was being pushed on to them, causing the number of assailants to greatly decrease.

"Here's the payment for today. 70,000 suits all in all, please confirm." [Guard 1]
"The amount's correct, thank you very much." [Ryouma]

Ryouma gave his thanks after he received the payment for the medical bill at the guardhouse.

"Don't mind it. It's not like it's hurting our pockets or anything. All we're doing is just shouldering the debt momentarily. We'll have those guys properly pay up later. Besides, this is also beneficial to us. All the ruffians have been going to you, so lately, they haven't been bothering other people much. Moreover, there are also those who have started to reform while under forced labor, so this really isn't a bad thing." [Guard 1]
"Hearing that makes me relieved. Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

Ryouma gave his thanks one more time, and then he left the guardhouse.

"Good work." [Guards]
"Thanks for today." [Guards]

It's become a routine for Ryouma to be attacked while on the way home, and have to go to the guardhouse. As a result, the guards at the guardhouse and the northern gate have somewhat become acquainted with Ryouma. Like this the guards would wave and call Ryouma, while Ryouma would do the same back as he went on his way home.

Around the same time, at a different place, inside a room.

Within the dimly lit room were two figures. Those figures were the guild master of the tamer guild, Matthew, and a suspicious masked man.

"It seems that boy's store is still in business… What's going on? I believe I ordered you to crush his store, but…" [Matthew]

Said Matthew as he sent a glare at the mask man. The masked man bowed deeply.

"My apologies. I did not expect this result as I hired skilled bouncers, but that boy was stronger than I had anticipated…" [Masked Man]
"Incompetent fool! It's only a brat! What the heck have you been doing!? I've been giving you money after money, and yet you have no results to show!?" [Matthew]

The man bit his lips. This man was an expert who would take dirty jobs, put up a plan according to the client's wish, and execute it. People who work at this field will do anything for money, but there are also those who had a sense of aesthetics or pride. This man was that type. He had took pride in his work. But right now, that pride is being trampled on, causing him relentless throes of vexation.

The man has been taking jobs from Matthew for a long time. This time was also the same. He received a payment, and as soon as the Jamil Household got home, he hired some men and went after Ryouma's store. However, he hasn't been able to bring out a single result.

At the start he may have simply been adopting a wait-and-see strategy as he randomly chose people, but right now is different. He has been calling skilled people from other towns, paying them, and ordering them to attack. A regular store would have long folded by now.

But until now he hasn't been successful. There are three reasons behind this. One, Ryouma is protected by several influential people making it difficult for his men to move. Second, Ryouma himself was simply far too strong. And lastly, in order to hire people it's needed to pay up the appropriate amount, but Matthew hasn't been paying.

"If we don't hire an expert now, then…" [Masked Man]
"That again!!? I believe I've informed you that I will NOT be releasing more money than that! Any more than this won't be appropriate for a little kid like that! If you think you can exploit money from me like this, give it up!" [Matthew]
"I don't have any other methods aside from this." [Masked Man]
"This useless bastard… To begin with, why is that boy's store still open? Even though he's been using such a low-class magical beast like a slime… Oi, could it be? Is that boy's store actually profitable? You could investigate at least this much, right?" [Matthew]

When the masked man heard that, he couldn't help but wince back at Matthew's incompetence.

This masked man and Matthew may not have a deep relationship, but they have been working together for a long time. Because of that, he had a good grasp on Matthew's jealousy. And he couldn't help but wonder, why? Why is it that Matthew won't even bother to investigate the matters surrounding the people he wants hurt?

"Are you not aware? And here I thought you wanted him hurt because of his store's profits." [Masked Man]

Of course, that was not the masked man's true feelings. He's already fully aware that this man, Matthew, is doing this out of jealousy, and had said that as sarcasm.

Until now it was the masked man who had been responsible for putting together all the plans, and Matthew has not done a single thing till now except give approval. The masked man knew that as well, but he asked that only to put a stop to the conversation.

If one were to give an easy analogy for the man called Matthew, then he's like a kid who received a toy called authority. He desired authority, then upon receiving it, he wanted to use it. And Matthew would use those two toys of his, authority and money, to eliminate anyone he didn't like. He was that kind of man. That's why, perhaps… it's useless to think of a reason.

Matthew may not be a person who could be said to be above others when it comes to ability, but he was able to accumulate money and build connections through his position and authority. Matthew used those tools to slither his way to the good graces of those above him. And through bribery, he was able to ascend to an even

higher position. It was through repeating this sort of unscrupulous method that Matthew was able to take the seat of a guild master at a tamer guild's branch. Moreover, there were also plenty of times when Matthew would use the masked man to deal with future rivals.

"Hmph! Why must I be concerned about a brat like that? Besides, I do know something! Even if it's just a rumor I hear from time to time, I do know that he washes clothes cheaply, and a lot of customers come to his shop. In fact, he's even hired people. So I know that there's no way he could make a profit. Even if he does, it's probably a laughable amount." [Matthew]

At such a response, what else could the masked man do? Nothing. There was nothing else but disgust.

"It's certainly a miniscule amount from Matthew-sama's perspective." [Masked Man]

When Matthew heard that, he couldn't help but twist his face in delight. However the next words, were like a downpour of cold rain.

"But to small creatures like me, a store with enough profit to make a branch store can't be called small." [Masked Man]

Those words were clearly sarcastic. He might lose a good customer because of this as Matthew was a high-paying customer who would bring out money at the pettiest things. However, he's too stupid.

So far the masked man has had no problems with the people he has arranged. Each time, the men he has hired was always able to accomplish the job given. However, Ryouma was not a normal boy. Therefore, a normal method which worked for normal people couldn't work on him. So the masked man offered a change of plans, but Matthew wouldn't have any of it. That was the biggest reason they failed. And that failure hurt the masked man's pride.

If someone with the ability were to investigate Ryouma's background, then one would find out that he is someone who possesses connections to several influential people. The guild master of the adventurer's guild, the guild master of the merchant guild, the president of a leading firm in the country, and even the duke's household. For someone to lay his hand on a person like that, he must either be uninformed, or someone who possesses unyielding confidence. Matthew is the former, and the masked man is the latter.

Even if he were to go against the duke's household itself, the masked man is confident that they won't be able to catch him, but Matthew can only get in the way. If the masked man were to continue to associate himself with someone like Matthew, then he might just trip. At this rate, the risks won't match the reward. If Matthew were to do something like this again, then… it might be better for him to resign.

"Branch store!? What's the meaning of this!? I was told that his laundry services were cheap! There's no way he could make a profit with that!" [Matthew]
"It's true that's he's making a lot. In fact, the branch store seems to be a story from way back. And while it's true that he charges at a low price, a lot of customers come every day, you know? A single person might only pay 10 suits, but with a 1000? Then that's 10,000 suits. And because it's cheap, there are plenty of people who become regulars. Moreover, as long as people live, there will be laundries every day. In other words, he'll never run out of business. It's a really well-thought-out business plan." [Masked Man]
"True, true… that's definitely true. However! There shouldn't be any way for him to deal with that many laundry! Otherwise his employee expenses would pile up!" [Matthew]

The masked man blatantly sighed.

"That store can wash over a thousand laundries every day. Who, no, what do you think is washing those?" [Masked Man]
"Huh? It's a person of course! That's why I'm telling you it's not possible, because his expenses will pile up!" [Matthew]
"True, if it was a human, then his expenses would definitely pile up. However, what's washing the laundry is not a human, but a slime." [Masked Man]
"Slime… you say? You, what are you saying?" [Matthew]
"It's exactly as I have said. That slime you've been making fun of is what's washing the laundries, so there's no problem with expenses. That's all. I have nothing else to say to you." [Masked Man]

As the masked man said that, he took out a bag, and tossed it to Matthew.

"Huh? Money?" [Matthew]
"It's my portion of the money you have entrusted to me until now. I'm withdrawing from this request." [Masked Man]
"What!? Wait! Now you're telling me that YOU'RE withdrawing!?" [Matthew]

Without paying attention to Matthew's panicked, angry voice, the masked man admonished Matthew with a voice that carried a tinge of disgust.

"I've returned the money I've been entrusted with. You should quickly stray your hand from the boy called Ryouma. That is not an opponent that you can manage. If you listened to me, then it might have still been possible, but…" [Masked Man]

As the masked man finished saying that, he quickly used space magic without even giving Matthew the time to stop him. The masked man vanished from the room, Matthew was left all alone. A few seconds passed, and a vein bulged from Matthew's forehead. In his rage, Matthew kicked a nearby chair, and briskly strode out of the room. In his eyes glimmered hate and jealousy far more intense than before.

Chapter 6

Terms:
Scheme -> Skoom; consequently, Pier of Scheme -> Pier of Skoom.

Gimel -> Gimuru; since it's apparently too confusing to change it now.

Mistranslation last chapter:
The lesser form of Warp is actually Teleport. The last line in the last chapter just meant to say that the masked man was using space magic to leave the area.

The next day.

I went to the store in the morning. When I got there, I noticed that Karla-san was at the reception desk.

"Good morning, Karla-san. How was last night?" [Ryouma]
"Good morning, Boss. We weren't attacked last night, how about you?" [Karla]
"13 people came to attack me, you know? Anyway, here's the money I got. Please store it in the store's treasury." [Ryouma]
"Understood. By the way, there's something I'd like to discuss regarding the branch store." [Karla]
"What is it?" [Ryouma]
"Honestly speaking, we have more than enough funds from our sales and the medical bills now, so how about starting the branch soon?" [Karla]
"Already!? Shouldn't it still take more time for the others to learn about managing a store?" [Ryouma]

"That's true, however, Caulkins-san and the others were all former researchers, so they didn't have any problems with things like literature or arithmetic. Normally, it would also be necessary to learn how to bargain with the customers, and with other stores, as well as for stocking up. However, this store neither has any competitors, nor bargaining customers. So Carm-san and I prioritized teaching them how to deal with problems. Moreover, they've already finished learning how to use the account book, so all that's left now is to pile up some experience." [Karla]

Ahh, so it's like that…

"So in other words, the branch store isn't only there to make more profits, but also as a training school." [Ryouma]
"Exactly. But of course, either I or Carm will work at the store, to give them guidance. Afterwards, we'll decide when they're good enough to take care of the store by themselves." [Karla]
"I see…" [Ryouma]

We've been able to get by just fine before Caulkins-san and the others came… and the others should have also gotten used to their work by now… So while I can't leave the store to them right off the bat, it's something like an internship, so I guess it's fine?

"I don't think it's a bad idea. Let's do it. Then next is the location of the branch, the plot of land to build it on, and then lastly the store, right?" [Ryouma]
"Yes, please take care of it." [Karla]
"I understand, then I'll leave the employees of the new store to you. I'll go to the guild now and see what I can find out about the store." [Ryouma]

And so Ryouma went out of the store, and headed towards the merchant guild. There he was brought to the reception room, where the guild master received him.

"You came." [Grisela]
"Sorry for troubling you all the time. Getting straight to the point, I came here today to inquire about setting up a second store." [Ryouma]
"So you finally feel like setting up a branch store, huh? I've already prepared a list of recommendations regarding the towns you could set up your next store in. They are Delma, Azul, Skoom, Jillman, Lufes, and others." [Grisela]

To think she would actually prepare that for me, I'm grateful. It's my first branch store, so a place that's nearby and easy to get to from Gimuru will be good…

"It's better to have one near here, right? I've also prepared those." [Grisela]

This manner of reading minds… Frankly, I've somewhat gotten used to it by now.

"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]
"For the meantime, the towns near here that I recommend are Shuchiro, Harken, and Renafu. The town closest is Renafu." [Grisela]
"Can I buy land in that town?" [Ryouma]

When the guild master heard that, she grinned.

"Preparing it's no problem, but there's nothing as big as your store right now." [Grisela]

The land she recommended to me was around half the size of my current land with a building already built on it. I asked her about it while I looked at the rough sketch, and I found out that it was originally a general store. It already has a storage as well, so with just a little renovation it should be good to go.

"This store is diagonally opposite Pioro's. He's also already checked the building, and it's well built. You won't have any problems with this. You do have to deal with the documents at the guild over there though." [Grisela]
"So that's how it is. Thank you very much. I'll go with this." [Ryouma]

Like this I decided on my new store. Discussions really go fast when it's someone you trust, and all the more so when it's a specialist. Really, she's been such a big help.

When I went back to the store, I told Karla-san and Carm-san about the guild master's recommendation. After that I talked with Caulkins-san and the others about the branch store, and had them promise again not to hand the cleaner slimes to others. This is in the contract, but just in case. The three promised without any hesitation.

After that I left the store early. But before I headed back home, I stopped by Serge's store. There I told him about the second store, and the fact that I'll be going to Renafu in order to prepare for its opening. Afterwards I took a lot of cloth, and went back home. I have to start preparing for the trip from tomorrow onwards, but in the meantime I should treat as many cloths as I could. With this many I shouldn't run out any time soon.

According to Serge-san, the products made from the waterproof cloths had become quite popular, and are now selling really well. Especially amongst the adventurers and the merchants. It's not too strange though, after all, adventurers want to bring as few things as possible with them in order to be able to move easily. So it's only normal they'd want to be lighter.

As for the merchants, the ones who were buying were mainly those who didn't have carriages with roofs, and were using them as rain protection. It's true that there are leather covers for the carriages in this world, however, using those as a roof to shelter from the rain will make the carriage heavier and take up space. Meaning, not only will it increase the burden on the horses, but it will also cause the number of cargo the merchants can take with them to decrease.

If they do try to forcefully overload the carriage, then in the instance where they happen to run into magical beasts or bandits, they won't be able to run. Moreover, that much burden on the horses will significantly decrease its lifespan, causing them to have to buy a new one faster. Like this their profits will again greatly decrease. But that's not all, there's an unspoken rule amongst merchants regarding horses. A horse is considered to be a merchant's partner, so a merchant who fails to take care of their horse is considered to be a failure. A merchant that treats his own horse poorly will be given the cold shoulder by his fellow merchants. Contrary to all these demerits, a cover made from waterproof cloth does not take up space, is light, and is extremely effective. Because of this there are many merchants who have started to adopt it.

With that in mind I should feed the sticky slimes a lot and have them split faster. The demand will probably increase from now on, so it could be bad if I don't decrease the burden on the sticky slimes soon.

I went back home as I thought those things.

And then 4 days passed.

In these past few days I informed those who have helped me until now about my trip and settled the

necessary preparations. More specifically, I told the guild master of the adventurer's guild, Wogan, who is one of my first acquaintances, that I'll be leaving for a bit. I've also changed some of the store's policies.

The first change is the store's logo. Since there's a branch store now, I decided to put a logo on all our bags. The logo has the image of a slime, a bamboo, and the words 'Bamboo Forest' on it. I made a deal with Serge-san's store to get a craftsman to make and imprint the logo for our new bags. I plan to have the new store use these new bags right from the start. As for the customers in the Town of Gimuru, we'll exchange their bags with the new one.

The second thing that will change are the employees' day offs. Until now everyone's been taking turns to get a day off, so the employees haven't been able to go out together at all. So I figured I should change way the day offs work.

I need to let everyone know of these changes, so I better put up a sign letting people know that the changes will be implemented in approximately a month. The bags will also be changed within that time.

The third thing that'll change is the slime's management. Caulkins-san and the rest will be going to the branch store, so there won't be any slave magicians left back here in the main store. Normally, that would mean I won't be able to leave the store unattended for an extended period anymore, but that's not actually the case.

In these past two months, one of the three girls who are working away from their home, Maria-san, has been studying slave magic. Apparently her grandmother is a magician. So if it was just a question of magic power, then she should have more than enough. Unfortunately though, her grandmother died while she was still young, so she wasn't able to learn any magic. But since she got along well with Robelia-san, she's been practicing slave magic in her off days, and now she's able to make a contract with slimes. So I decided that from now on the management of the slimes will be left to Maria-san and Caulkins' trio. My job from now on will only be to retrieve the extra slimes when there are too many for them to contract.

… Be that as it may, I do wonder if I myself have a limit. From what I'd heard before, the founder of slave magic, who is an otherworlder, had no limits… I got mine from Gayn's trio as well, so does that mean I don't have any limits? …I haven't reached any limits yet too, so I guess I'll ask them about it later.

I finished my preparations in this way. And now is the day I set off.

"Then, I'll be going." [Ryouma]
"Take care!" [Everyone in the store]

Everyone from the store sent me off, and I left the town.

As I stepped out the town's gates, what greeted me was the sun's dazzling rays, the clear blue sky, and the road seemingly stretching endlessly. Then I ran. It's finally here! My first adventure – that's all by myself – since coming to this world!!

Renafu is a town you get to by passing through four small towns. And it takes three days all in all to get there. Also, while it may not be as big as Gimuru, it's also quite big in its own right. Now, getting there in 3 days would normally be considered fast, but since I'm using space magic along with qigong, that time is significantly shortened.

Qigong is used in the same way in this world as you would back in Earth, however, the effects are completely different. Back in Earth you could see plenty of performances being shown on TV where practitioners would hang their throat on a spear. With a little bit of practice anyone could do that, and as a matter of fact, I've actually managed to do just that. However, in this world, qigong isn't something like that. In this world, Qigong is able to strengthen and harden the human body in the same way magic is able to. In fact, it's able to do it even more efficiently.

By circulating the Ki through the internal organs and the skin. And by circulating it throughout the entire body, inside and out, qigong is able to greatly strengthen the body. Thereby greatly increasing the strength of one's muscles, and endurance against shock. And with the effects of the Ki instilled in the body, not even blade or arrow can penetrate it. Moreover, it does not require an incantation, so with enough practice, it's faster than magic.

I heard that using qigong is exhausting, but since the body is strengthened by using it, it becomes easier to move, and it also becomes harder to become tired. When I used it, it felt like the stamina consumption just got cancelled off by the ease of movement qigong provides. But what's more is that with enough mastery over

qigong, the body will become less susceptible to disease and will heal faster, making qigong more convenient for fighters that prefer to get up close and personal than magic.

As for the cons, you could say that there's a downside of having to go through harsh training for a long time before being able to use it… Putting it bluntly, if you can use qigong, then there's no point in using strengthening magic. But in my case, I'm more interested in magic so I've been using it more, but… Well, whatever. There's nothing wrong with being able to use both anyway. In any case I should get moving now.

I've been using the space magic 'Warp' to move in this trip, but I figured I should leave some magic power just in case, so I strengthened my body and started running. By allowing my magic power to recover as I run, I'm able to proceed at a pace that normal people can't imitate.

I've also considered going slowly and hunting some magical beasts, but the magical beasts here are so weak I don't' even need to use my qigong and magic. This is something I've come to understand in these two of months of going back and forth my house to the store, going on my errands, and going as far as I can while doing so.

It does seem like a slightly stronger magical beast has been appearing near the Town of Renafu though, so if I go quickly, then I might get the chance to fight with it. It would be nice if I could get to it before it gets hunted by someone else.

Also, since I'm going anyway, I've been entrusted by the guild master of the merchant guild with a parcel for Pioro-san. I took it since I'm going to pay him a visit anyway, but I should still make sure I finish this job quickly. And so because of that, I decided to hurry to the Town of Renafu.

I proceeded quickly using my magic power and my stamina. As I left the forest, I crossed the meadows, and then I passed through the small towns. It has only started to get the dark by the time I reached the fourth town, but I guess I'll stop here for the day…

I went off the road a bit, and used my 'Dimension Home'. I opened the 'Item Box' inside and I took out a cup and various meals for travelling that I bought before leaving. There were all sort of delicious stuff back in my world, so I can't help but wonder how the food here are…

First is a square-shaped, thin sheet that looks like a biscuit.

"… It's crispy, but it's mostly flour… not delicious." [Ryouma]

I poured some water in my cup with water magic, and drank it. Next is this tawny, dice-shaped lump.

"Hmm… it's hard… but I can still bite through it… Tastes like cracker. It's probably this hard because it's so thick." [Ryouma]

Next is the jerky.

"Salty… yep, that's pretty much it, salty. A little bite and salt erupts… There's no umami either, just salt. Yeah, I should stop eating this now. It's not good for the body." [Ryouma]

Last is this green bread.

"This also seems to be hard… I can tell just by touching it." [Ryouma]

After psyching myself, I took a chomp.

"Ouch!? It's hard… what is this? It's way too hard." [Ryouma]

My teeth literally couldn't bite it. Sigh… There's no helping it, so I reinforced my jaw with qigong. I took another chomp, but this time I was able to bite it. "Hmm… this doesn't seem to have a taste…" or so I thought as I munched, when…

"Ek… glurgh! This tastes horrible!!!" [Ryouma]

I disconcertedly drank water, but it wasn't enough, so I poured another, and drank more.

"Ahhh… Alright, I've calmed down… but still, what the hell is this!!?" [Ryouma]

What was that? Grass? Medicinal plants? There were all sorts mixed together so I can't tell, but… It blended with my saliva just as hard as I bit it! And some sort of grassy odor invaded me followed by the budding taste of something astringent, bitter, and harsh! It tastes horrible!! I'll never buy these kind of travel foods out of curiosity again! Actually, I don't care much about the other food, but I will absolutely, never, ever, buy that green thing again!!

After I carved that decision into my mind, I took a fruit out of my 'Item Box' to wash away the taste, and sunk my teeth into it.

After supper ended, I entered the 'Dimension Home' and went to sleep. Normally, it'd be necessary to pay attention to one's surrounding when going out, but with the 'Dimension Home' that's not the case. Really, what a convenient spell.

Chapter 7

The next day.

I passed the night safely inside the 'Dimension Home', and then I started moving again. It was a little past noon when the walls of Renauph came to sight.

For the meantime I'll head over to Pioro's store, but before that, I better wash myself with the cleaner slimes inside the 'Dimension Home'. It's not really appropriate to visit someone while being this sweaty and dirty.

After the cleaner slime shower ended, I went out of the 'Dimension Home' and walked towards the town's gate. Showing the guard my guild card from the adventurer's guild, I was able to pass by easily. Incidentally, I took the chance and asked the guard about the location of the Saionji Firm. The guard told me to walk straight until I reach a dead end, and then turn right, after which I should see the firm.

I thanked the man, and then went as he taught me. Walking through the wide road, a building surrounded by robust walls eventually came to sight. There was a great number of people carrying things in and out of that building. I don't know what this building is, but this is probably the end of the street.

Going right from there, I found sign with the words 'Saionji Firm' written on it.

"It's big…" [Ryouma]

Lined up were an astounding number of stores, selling different things. There were meat, fishes, dried greens, preserved food, seasonings, and more. There was even a small store in a corner selling side dishes. It seems that all of these together make up the Saionji firm.

"I wonder where I should enter…" [Ryouma]

For the meantime let's try entering the spice store, and ask someone there. Why the spice store? Well, I figured it'd be best to go to a store where there aren't a lot of customers, so as not to get in the way. And spices are expensive, so there won't be a lot of people. In fact, there isn't even a single customer.

"Ex–" [Ryouma]
"Welcome." [Somebody]

When I entered the store, a voice called out to me. While I was wondering where the voice came from, a girl came out from behind the counter. She's most likely around mine and Elia's age. The girl had flowing, blonde hair, a fair complexion, and… fox ears?

The girl appears to have been working on something as her hair was disheveled, and she was lightly fixing herself, when she came out of the counter.

"What business do you have with us today?" [Girl]
"My apologies, however I'm not a customer. I've been entrusted with a parcel from the merchant guild of Gimuru for Pioro Saionji-sama." [Ryouma]
"Oh? So ya came with a parcel for dad? Thanks a lot." [Girl]

Dad? This girl… she's Pioro-san's daughter!?

"Excuse me, but would you happen to be Pioro-san's daughter?" [Ryouma]
"You know my dad?" [Girl]
"Yes. We've been acquainted recently." [Ryouma]
"Oh, I see. Sorry for the late introduction, I'm the daughter of Pioro Saionji, Miyabi Saionji. A pleasure to meet ya." [Miyabi]
"Ryouma Takebayashi, a pleasure to meet you as well." [Ryouma]
"Ryouma… Where have I heard that name before? In any case, come inside." [Miyabi]

Being guided by Miyabi-san, we passed through the deeper corridors of the store into the reception room. Then after a minute, Miyabi-san came back with Pioro-san. Fast! She told me to wait a bit when she went out, but… I didn't have to wait at all!

"Ryouma, it's been two months! Looks like you've finally dropped by Renauph." [Pioro]
"Long time no see, Pioro-san. I just arrived actually. And I came here to set up a branch store." [Ryouma]
"Oh, so you're putting up a branch store here? Then in that case, lemme give ya a tour of this town's

merchant guild." [Pioro]
"But before that, the parcel…" [Ryouma]

I opened my 'Item Box', took out the parcel I've been entrusted with, and handed it to Pioro-san.

"Oh right, what's this?" [Pioro]
"I haven't been told of its contents." [Ryouma]
"Oh?" [Pioro]

Said Pioro-san as he opened the parcel. Inside was a letter. After Pioro-san finished reading it, he said

"Ryouma, it's been tough on you recently, huh?" [Pioro]
"Oh, was it about my situation?" [Ryouma]
"Just about the recent stuff. The letter's Granny Gri asking me to help ya out. I would've even without being asked to though." [Pioro]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]
"It's fine, it's fine. Oh right, lemme introduce you. This one's my daughter. She's a year older than you, but if ya ever need anything, ask her for help, k?" [Pioro]

Since the conversation's turned to her, Miyabi-san, who was keeping from interjecting all this time, spoke.

"Dad, what do ya mean, "this one"? I have a name ya know, it's Miyabi. You should at least use my proper name when introducing. 'Sides, I've at least already properly introduced myself." [Miyabi]
"Eh, really? Then what about this? Miyabi's actually the daughter of the founder, so I named her after the ancestor."
"What cha talking 'bout all of tha sudden? I've never heard of that!" [Miyabi]

Eh, what? Is this a two-person comedy? Whatever the case, I can't just not react.

"Did your ancestor achieve some kind of amazing exploit?" [Ryouma]
"Haven't heard of anythin' in particular. As far's I know, she was just a pretty poster girl, who got married and lived in bliss while being taken care of by her family." [Pioro]
"I see, so you wanted your daughter to live a happy life just like she…" [Ryouma]
"Wait, wait! That ancestor, Miyabi's, dad is the founder, ya know? And right now, I'm Miyabi's dad. So in other words, it's as if I'm the founder!" [Pioro]
"Are you the one who's being named after!?" [Ryouma]

Oops! I ended up throwing a tsukkomi!

"Excuse me." [Ryouma]
"It's fine, it's fine. It was a pretty good tsukkomi. A little weak though. Lately, my daughter hasn't been throwin' her tsukkomis, so it's not bad." [Pioro]

Whew, that's a relief. Wait, tsukkomi exists in this world? This is the fault of an otherworlder, definitely.

Tsukkomi, huh? In my previous life I had a boss from Kansai that would snap at people for letting a boke pass. I guess it's become a reflex? It was really annoying having to deal with a boke while being busy with work… But then letting it pass would've wasted even more time, so there were times when I couldn't help but throw a tsukkomi. But there were also plenty of times were I unconsciously ignored it, so I got unreasonably scolded a lot.

As I was thinking that, I shrugged the thought off, and went to the merchant guild with Pioro-san. Pioro-san led the way, and now we're standing right before the building with high walls that was right before the Saionji Firm. It's my second time seeing it, but as expected, it's really big. In fact even if these walls were castles walls, they'd probably still be considered good quality.

I thought that to myself as I followed Pioro-san. When we got inside, I couldn't help but be amazed at how even its interior was like a castle. After walking for a while, we got to the reception room, and Pioro-san spoke.

"How's it? Amazing, right?" [Pioro]
"Yes. I thought the outer walls were like that of a castle's." [Ryouma]
"But of course. After all, this building used to be a fortress, ya know?" [Pioro]
"A fortress?" [Ryouma]
" 'xactly. A long, long time ago, during wartime, this place was apparently used as the frontline base. And this town was built at the site of that fortress. So they built this guild, that's at the center of the town, with the fortress as reference." [Pioro]

"I see." [Ryouma]
"But there's one more reason why the building was built like this. Take a look outside this window." [Pioro]

The window Pioro-san pointed out was made with glass and was easy to look out of. When I tried looking through it…

"Amazing… It's my first time seeing so many large-type magical beasts." [Ryouma]

Outside the window were many magical beasts. From medium-type to large-type, and even the bird-type, Wyverns, which are thought to be of the dragon race were present. A saddle could be seen affixed to the Wyvern's neck, and a number of people riding on them could be seen. This scene that felt like it was proclaiming, "This is a fantasy," spread before my eyes.

"These magical beasts 'ave all been gathered 'ere all for tha sake of transporting goods." [Pioor]
"All of it!?" [Ryouma]
" 'xactly. Flying magical beasts can transport things quickly, but several facilities are needed for them to work. Such as a place for them to wait, a place to load and unload the goods, and a terminal for them to land. So they referred to a fortress to build a place like that." [Pioro]
"I see." [Ryouma]

Magical beasts would definitely need a place to stay at. All the more so with large-types.

"With the structure having been designed specifically to transport goods using magical beasts, the founder of the Saionji Firm who ordered the construction of this town and made this all a reality, called it an "Airport". What do ya think? It's good taste, yeah?" [Pioro]

No, because that person didn't come up with that name at all! But I can't say that! Ah, in the future otherworld might think the same of my store, huh? Where they'll see it and go, "That guy didn't come up with this at all!" or something. Just like Pioro-san's Manzai-like routine with his daughter, there seems to be traces of the otherworlders' tone and casual actions.

"Airport, huh? It's probably because a port city gathers a lot of things." [Ryouam]
"So you understand!" [Pioro]

Pioro-san, being in a good mood, hit my back as a female employee of the guild entered. Talking business, the one who said I'd buy a store wasn't Pioro-san but me. She was slightly surprised at the start, but after that everything went smoothly and we were able to finish the procedures. From the looks of things, since Pioro-san was able to see the state of the store I'd bought before, the store seems to have been prepared beforehand, and we were able to smoothly finish the deal after deciding on the purchase.

After that, I left the guild and went to the store I'd just bought.

The store I'd bought was 2 stories tall. The first story had space for the storage room and the store itself, while the second story was for the reception room and the office. Moreover, behind this store is the house used by the previous owner. That was also included with the purchase I made. Excluding the living room, that house had five rooms in total. It doesn't seem feasible to give the employees individual rooms, but it seems to be normal to share a room with a few others, so there shouldn't be any problems using it as lodging for them.

"Any problems?" [Pioro]
"None. It seems I'll be able to make use of this store as soon as I make the furniture and the shelves. I'll contact Gimuru immediately, so at the fastest, it'll take three days, and at the slowest it'll take 5 days at most before the employees come." [Ryouma]

When Pioro-san heard my words, he inclined his head.

"Really? It should take three days just sending a letter from here." [Pioro]
"There's no problem on that front, because I have a superfast way to contact them." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I opened my 'Dimension Home' and took out the Rimel Bird. I normally let them do as they want in the abandoned mine, but I took just one with me as a way to contact the others.

The name of this rimel bird is Drei. From what I'd heard before, it's three in the German language. It kind of sounds cool, no? By the way the Nightmare Rimel Bird's named Eins, meaning one. The other birds are Zwei, Vier, Funf, and Sechs respectively.

If you're wondering why I suddenly named the Rimel Birds, well it's because Elia sent me a letter saying she named hers. Apparently she used musical terms to name them. Because of the contract it's possible to distinguish between different beats of the same type, so there's no need to name them, but I figured I'd try naming them too.

While I was thinking that, Pioro-san fixedly stared at the Rimel Bird.

"Ha~, certainly, if you have a rimel bird you'll be able to contact them quickly." [Pioro]

The Rimel Bird can fly at 200kph to 300kph. When I used 'Sensory Link' and looked at the world through its eyes, the scenery felt like when I ride on the Shinkansen, so it's probably around the same speed. Regardless, it's definitely fast.

The Rimel Bird already flies fast normally, but when they used wind magic and ride on its tail wind, their speed goes up even more, and they're able to fly even further. If I ask the Rimel Bird, what would take a carriage three days would only take them until morning by tomorrow, if fast, then it could even get there by the end of the day.

Taking a pen and ink out of my 'Item Box', I wrote a letter. Then I took out a small pipe and a metal fitting with a red cloth attached to it. I inserted the letter into the pipe, and attached it to Drei's leg. Lastly, I rolled the red cloth onto Drei's neck, and affixed it with the metal fixing. With this the preparations are complete.

That cloth I put last is the sign that it's a magical beast used for communication. If I don't attach something that stands out, it might cause a commotion when it enters the town, and get shot by the guardsmen.

So with this, all the preparations are completed, and I went out of the store to send Drei off.

"I'm relying on you." [Ryouma]
"Piroro!" [Drei]

Drei chirped as if replying to me, then he flapped his wings, and flew into the skies. It revolved in the sky once, going faster and faster, and then it headed over to the direction of the Town of Gimuru, until I could no longer see it.

"Good." [Ryouma]
"All that's left is waiting then." [Pioro]
"Yes." [Ryouma]
"Ryouma, didja book a hotel already?" [Pioro]

Ah, not good. I forgot!

"I forgot." [Ryouma]
"Then, how 'bout stayin' over at my place then?" [Pioro]
"Is it alright?" [Ryouma]
"Of course, no need ta be reserved." [Pioro]
"Then, I'll take you up on your offer." [Ryouma]

Like this I decided to accept Pioro-san's offer and stay at his house.

Chapter 8

With me staying at Pioro-san's place having been decided, Pioro-san brought me, and we entered the spice store of the Saionji Firm. Apparently, this store is connected to Pioro-san's house. When we got inside, just like this afternoon, Miyabi-san was tending to the store.

"Welcome. Eh? What the, if it ain't dad." [Miyabi]
"It's not "what the". and I'm not alone, Ryouma's with me, ya know?" [Pioro]
"Sorry for the trouble." [Ryouma]
"Ryouma-san, tha guest room's been prepared, so don't hold back and go ahead n make ya self at home, k?" [Miyabi]

Did she already know that I'm saying over? But we'd only just decided it a while ago…

"I thought you'd be staying over, did I get it wrong?" [Miyabi]
"No, thank you, I'll be in your care then. It's just that it so happens that we decided me straying over just a while ago, so it was a little surprising." [Ryouma]
"The guest room's always in good condition, since we don't really know when a guest might decide ta drop by." [Miyabi]
"I see, thank you very much." [Ryouma]
"Don't mind it, don't mind. Oh, right! Want me ta bring ya ta tha room?" [Miyabi]
"Please, thank you." [Ryouma]

And so, Miyabi-san brought me to the guest room. As for Pioro-san, it looks like he went back to work.

"Here's the guest room, please think it as if it's your own house." [Miyabi]

The room I was brought to was too big for only a single person, and was furnished with good furniture. It had a warm atmosphere to it.

"As for supper, I'll bring ya some nice food that won't bring shame ta tha Saionji name, so look forward ta it!" [Miyabi]
"Thank you very much. I'll look forward to it." [Ryouma]

As I said that, Miyabi-san appeared to be satisfied with my response as she nodded her head.

"I'll be going then. Enjoy yourself till supper, k?" [Miyabi]

Miyabi-san quietly left the room.

"I wonder what supper will be." [Ryouma]

Well, whatever's the case, it won't be like the preserved food I ate last night. Maybe it'll be meat. Or maybe fish? There's not a lot of fishes here in this country, so… Well of course, it's not like there's none at all, but it's the inland area so there're no waters to get fish from. Although there are plenty of river fishes and dried fishes, it's difficult to acquire fresh marine products. An exception would be the few towns with a lake nearby where the fish industry is going strong, like the Town of Skoom for one.

Regarding marine products, as expected, it should be Japanese cuisine. I haven't eaten any Japanese cuisine since I got here. There're plenty of otherworlders, so I thought there'd be plenty of different cuisines, but I haven't seen any Japanese cuisines at all. Should I ask Pioro-san if they have any miso or soy sauce? If they're handling food products, then I might be able to get something that's similar.

Afterwards I rested in the room for a bit and mediated, then a male servant came and told me that supper was ready. The male servant brought me to a room with a dining table.

"You came, Ryouma. Take a seat." [Pioro]

At the center of the room, Pioro-san, Miyabi-san, and another beastmen fox tribe woman were already seated. The woman looked similar to Miyabi-san, so she's probably Pioro-san's wife. She's beautiful.

I took my seat as I thought that. Sitting at one side of the table, in front of me was Pioro-san, by my right was Miyabi-san, and by my left was Pioro-san's wife.

"Excuse me." [Ryouma]

"You don't haf ta be that stiff, ya know? I think you've already noticed it too, but this here is Miyabi's mother, my wife, Kurana." [Pioro]
"Kurana Saionji, a pleasure ta meet you." [Kurana]
"Ryouma Takebayashi, it's my pleasure as well." [Ryouma]
"I've heard of tha rumors. It seems that you're quite tha promising young lad." [Kurana]
"Oh not at all, my luck just happens to be good. And it's also because of the help of the people around me that I've been blessed with. All I've really done is employ and rely on them." [Ryouma]

No, really. The store and the employees were mostly taken care of by Serge-san and the guild master, Carm-san and Karla-san advised me on the store's management, and Fei-san and Li Ling-san protect the store. The other employees are helping me out with the rest of the work, so if everyone wasn't around, then forget about getting a branch store out, it'd be strange if I even got a store.

All of my success is thanks to the people I've met and their help.

"If you're able ta say such things from the bottom of your heart, then you're plenty amazing." [Kurana]
"'xactly, when young people succeed quickly, they lose sight of everythin' around them and start thinkin' that they can do anythin'." [Pioro]
"Shops are around precisely because there are customers and servants. If a merchant forgets ta thank those around them and make light of their efforts, then it's the end for that merchant. In that situation, regardless of how much talent one has, you won't be able to get by unless ya play dirty. Being able to understand that, you're already plenty amazing, Ryouma-han." [Kurana]

Something like that, huh?

"A merchant's conduct is something that will naturally be learned in the distant future. So it's plenty amazing if ya can at least talk like one now. I mean look at Miyabi, she ain't one bit polite is she?" [Pioro]
"Dad! Why am I being used as an example!?" [Miyabi]
"Eh, it can't be helped, after all your already around so it's easy to use ya as an example." [Piroro]
"Miyabi, it's better not to push yourself, and just talk normally." [Kurana]

Ahh, so she really was pushing herself, huh?

"Ryouma's also noticed too, ya know? That you're pushing yourself to talk differently." [Pioro]
"A little, actually. I don't think it's weird to change your manner of speech when talking towards customers, but I don't think you're that used to it, so please don't mind it so much." [Ryouma]
"See? Even Ryouma-han whom you'd just met even noticed that you're only putting up a front." [Kurana]
"How frustrating…" [Miyabi]

Ahh, looks like she's started to become depressed… is it really something to be bitter about though?

"Sorry 'bout this, please ignore this kid." [Kurana]
"Miyabi's been imitatin' me ever since she became interested in merchant work and started helping me out. I'm happy, but whenever she shows an opening while negotiating with a customer, she becomes quite stubborn. In fact, just recently, a customer told her that she wasn't like a woman." [Pioro]
"It's not like I want to be seen as a woman that I'm trying to improve. It's just that…" [Miyabi]
"Just that?" [Pioro]
"I hate the old man that told me I'm not feminine! So I won't be able ta get rid of this sense of defeat unless I become graceful!" [Miyabi]

That's what you're bothered about!? Well, I guess it's better than being bothered by something weird.

"In other words, my daughter hates losing. You don't need to mind it, Ryouma-han." [Kurana]
"Enough of that, right now's time for meal, ya know? Today, we prepared a rare meal." [Pioro]

As Pioro-san said that, he signaled with his hand to the servant standing at a corner.

"Rare?" [Ryouma]
"That's right. Ryouma's good at cooking, so it's difficult ta surprise ya unless we prepare somethin'. So in the end I figured we'd make ya something queer." [Pioro]
"It'd be great if it was to Ryouma-han's taste though." [Kurana]

When the smell of the dish reached my nose… this is!

"This smell is… miso soup?" [Ryouma]

When I muttered that, Pioro-san opened his eyes wide in disappointment, while Kurana-san laughed amused.

"What, so ya knew about miso soup, Ryouma? ~Sigh, and here I thought I'd be able to surprise ya." [Pioro]

Not at all, in fact, it's a huge success! I'm really, really surprised!

"N-no, I'm more than surprised enough. Pioro-san, you can get miso soup?" [Ryouma]
"Yeah, I can. Few sell it, so we don't have plenty of stock, but… do you want some?" [Pioro]
"Yes! Please!" [Ryouma]
"It's not that expensive anyway, so I'll get ya some. If you come ta like it, feel free ta stop by and buy some." [Pioro]
"Yes, thank you very much!?" [Ryouma]
"It's fine, it's fine. Ah, by the way, if ya know 'bout miso soup, then d'ya also now 'bout soy sauce?" [Pioro]
"You also have soy sauce!?" [Ryouma]
"Yep." [Pioro]

Like this, while the servant was bringing us food, it's been decided that I'll be getting some miso soup, soy sauce, vinegar, and mirin.

To think there would actually be these kind of seasonings in this world! According to Pioro-san, these sort of stuff are being manufactured in an island where dragon newts lived. Unfortunately, because most people don't know how to use it, it's not very popular. What a waste.

"Let's eat first. We'll talk while we eat." [Pioro]
"Oh, that's right. Then, itadakimasu!" [Ryouma]

I took the dish and the chopsticks, and first brought the rice to my mouth. Delicious! This is my first rice in three years!! Bread's staple here in this country, so I haven't gotten any rice at all. Now it's not like I hate bread or anything, but rice just happens to have that nostalgic taste. Next, is the fish in soy sauce, and the miso soup… ah delicious… it's exactly how it was back in Earth…

"How nostalgic…" [Ryouma]
"Oh? Ryouma-han, did use ta live in a dragon newt village?" [Kurana]
"Eh? Ah, no." [Ryouma]
"Really? Ya looked like a dragon newt that hasn't gone back home in a long time though." [Kurana]
"Is that so?" [Ryouma]
"That's right, and what's more is that Ryouma's really good at using chopsticks. Those are really just furnishings, so it would've been fine if ya just left them alone. It's really rare ta see a customer that's not dragon newt use chopsticks well." [Pioro]
"Ryoum-han, where did ya come from?" [Kurana]

During times like these, I bring out my grandparents card!

"I come from a small village. My grandmother used to make me lots of miso soup in the past. It was also from her that I learned how to use chopsticks. My grandparents are former adventurers, so apparently they've travelled the world a lot. They probably came to know of these sort of things during their travels." [Ryouma]
"Oh, is that how it is?" [Pioro]

Did I manage to deceive them?

"By tha way, what are ya gonna do starting tomorrow? Tha employees of the store your store won't be coming till three days later, right?" [Pioro]
"I plan to create furniture, practice, and do some adventurer work during that time." [Ryouma]

It was there that Kurana asked me a question.

"Ara, Ryouma-han, you're an adventurer?" [Kurana]
"Yes. Right now, I'm not really sure whether my main job is adventurer work or my store though." [Ryouma]
"So that's how it is." [Miyabi]
"What's your rank now?" [Kurana]
"Right now, I'm rank E." [Ryouma]
"E? You're younger by a year than our daughter, right?" [Kurana]
"I just became E rank two months ago." [Ryouma]
"At that age, E rank's more than enough. You also have experience with subjugation requests, right?" [Kurana]

After that, I talked about the subjugation request at the mine, and then I asked them about this town.

Apparently, this town was made by the otherworlder founder of the Saionji Firm for the sake of business. It might be because of that, that the shopkeepers and servants of the stores here go way back. There also seem to be a lot of people who use the Kansai dialect amongst the people who grew up here. Incidentally, Kurana-san was born in this town.

I don't think the otherworlder purposely tried to spread the Kansai dialect, but when I think about how the otherworlder unconsciously left something behind, a feeling I can't describe swells up inside me. Will I also leave something behind in the future? …Well, there's no point thinking about this right now.

I also asked about the guild. From what I hear, there are four guilds, including the merchant guild, being gathered within those walls.

"There're entrances from all directions, but inside that are the merchant guild, adventurer's guild, artisan guild, and the dragoon guild." [Pioro]

Dragoon guild? That's new. When I asked about it, Miyabi-san explained it to me.

"What's the dragoon guild?" [Ryouma]
"It's a gathering of former tamer guild members who use slave magic to carry things with their flying magical beasts. When the airport was built, they went independent, so I guess you could say it's a guild engaged in the air transportation industry. The tamer guild seems ta do any job, but tha dragoon guild specializes in exporting people and goods, as well as actin' as bodyguards for those.

It's quite difficult to have magical beasts carry people and fly in the sky, so the dragoon guild makes their magical beasts undergo special training. And although they're independent now, they still seem ta have some connection ta tha tamer's guild, ya know? It's said that tha first slave magic user who could tame a flying magical beast that could carry people, also took a course from the dragoon guild once." [Miyabi]
"To think that there's actually a guild like that…" [Ryouma]

It's obvious, but it looks I really still have a lot to learn.

"Tha gatherin' of ingredients and resources are taken care of by tha adventurer's guild. Then tha artisan guild deals with tha raw material, while tha merchant guild sells tha products and resources. And finally, tha dragoon guild's responsible for exporting tha goods ta towns far away. And of course, all this is thanks ta our ancestor-sama's efforts." [Miyabi]

Said Miyabi-san as she puffed her chest. Pioro-san appeared to also share her sentiment. Apparently, they take great pride in this town, it's airport, and their otherworld ancestor.

As I listened to their stories about the town, I gobbled up more of the nostalgic Japanese cuisine. After that, I went back to my room, used the cleaner slime shower, and quickly went to rest.

I wonder what I should do tomorrow. As I thought that, a wave of drowsiness attacked me because of a combination of being full and the pent up fatigue. I can endure it, but there's no point in doing so right now anyway, so I guess I'll just go to sleep now… I'll think about what to do tomorrow, tomorrow… I have time anyway…

Chapter 9

The next day.

Waking up early in the morning, I quickly readied myself, and left the room. Just as I got out of the room, Miyabi-san was there.

"Ryouma-han, g'morning!" [Miyabi]
"Good morning, Miyabi-san." [Ryouma]
"I thought I'd wake ya up, but 't looks like your awake 'lready. You're quite the early bird, huh?" [Miyabi]
"Really?" [Ryouma]
"We wake up pretty early since we're merchants, so for Ryouma-han ta wake up the same time as us is plenty early, ya know? But of course, the servants preparing the meal wake up even earlier." [Miyabi]

I see.

"Ah, no good. Ryouma-han, Food's already ready so feel free ta stuff yourself." [Miyabi]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

And so, just like yesterday, I was brought to the dining room, and we had our meal. Speaking of which, everyone eats quite fast… Well, I do eat around the same pace myself too though.

After the meal Pioro-san and Kurana-san went to their jobs.

"Aight, then I'll leave it to you, Miyabi." [Pioro]
"Do a good job." [Kurana]
"Leave it ta me!" [Miyabi]

"Huh? What are they talking about?" Is what I was thinking when Miyabi-san came over and talked to me.

"Ryouma-han, do ya have any plans for today? Have ya gotten used ta the town already? Lemme show ya around." [Miyabi]
"I'd be grateful, but what about your work?" [Ryouma]
"No prob, no prob, Ya know, I might be the president's daughter, but I'm still only 12. It's pretty normal not ta do anything. Me watching over the store 's just practice for the future." [Miyabi]

Now that she mentions it that does make sense.

"Rather than myself, I'd say you're plenty strange, being only 11, yet already having a store, but… that's definitely an exception, right?" [Miyabi]

Well yeah… In any case since she's going to show me around, I could leave my adventurer work for later, and go make those furniture first.

"Then, today, I want to create some furniture for my store, so could you bring me to a store I could buy some lumber from?" [Ryouma]
"No prob, no prob, I'll bring Ryouma-han ta a good store." [Miyabi]

Said Miyabi-san as she puffed her chest. As the two left the store, Drei, who has been tasked with a message to Gimuru since yesterday, arrived.

"Ah." [Ryouma]
"What's… kya!?" [Miyabi]

Drei perched over my shoulder. But because he went in between me and Miyabi-san, Miyabi-san was taken by surprise, and she jumped back. Oh! Her tail's moving vigorously! … In my past life, I heard that foxes normally don't show their emotion through their tails much, but I guess beastmen fox tribes are different. But then again, she hasn't moved her tail much till now, so maybe it's just because she's surprised. A reflex in other words… well in any case, I better apologize for having frightened her.

"Sorry, I ended up frightening you, this one here is my slave monster." [Ryouma]
"Slave monster? Oh, right… It's quite unique though. I've never seen such a pretty magical beast before." [Miyabi]
"It's called Rimel Bird. It flies really fast, so I had it bring a letter to the Town of Gimuru." [Ryouma]

I then took the letter from the cylinder attached to its leg, and read it. It's the reply from the others.

Looks like Drei managed to arrive last night and was able to get a reply. According to this, everyone plans to make a trip here, and they'll be leaving today, so their arrival will be three days from now. Well, the expected time of arrival anyway.

I informed Miyabi about the contents of the letter, and then we started walking again. Miyabi-san brought me to a lumber manufacturer from which I bought some lumber. I then stored it into my 'Dimension Home', and then went back to the store.

I selected a store house in the work area, after which I had the acid slimes make some components, while the sticky slimes along with me put together the components with nail and sticky liquid. Like this we were able to slowly make furniture of all sorts, like chairs, tables, and shelves.

Miyabi-san watched us work quietly, but it doesn't look like she's just watching. And after a while, Miyabi-san asked me a question.

"Ryouma-han, what are these?" [Miyabi]
"They're slimes?" [Ryouma]
"No, no, no, no, no way, absolutely no way! I've never seen slimes likes these! Why are slimes able to use tools!?" [Miyabi]
"It's because I taught them. And not only tools, but also weapons likes spears and staffs. In fact the slimes can also use Taijutsu, you know?" [Ryouma]
"Really!?" [Miyabi]
"Yes." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I shaved off the wood waste of a wooden rod with 'Polish Wheel', handed it over to a sticky slime, and made it show off some of its staff techniques.

"… It's seriously doing it." [Miyabi]
"Right?" [Ryouma]
"Were slimes always this skillful?" [Miyabi]
"At the start they were normal slimes, but after training a lot, they became like this." [Ryouma]
"So that's how it is, didn't know that was possible at all." [Miyabi]
"A lot of people don't. In fact, everyone who sees it is shocked at first." [Ryouma]
"If you announce your finding, it'll be a huge find, ya know?" [Miyabi]
"You think so? Slimes are thought of lowly, both by researchers and the tamer guild, so they won't think much of it. And besides, I don't have any intention of publicizing my research findings yet." [Ryouma]

As I said that, Miyabi-san muttered under her breath, "What a waste" as she stared at the slimes. The silence continued for a few minutes like that until Miyabi-san suddenly asked me this.

"… Ryouma-han, what will ya be doing next year?" [Miyabi]
"What I'll be doing?" [Ryouma]
"Ryouma-han, you're 11 right now, right? You'll be turning 12 next year, so aren't ya entering the imperial capital's academy? Ryouma-han, you're store's making plenty from the looks of things, so it's not like ya can't pay the tuition fee, right? Won't ya go to the academy?" [Miyabi]

Academy, huh?

"I don't really feel like going. I'd rather train myself, and work as an adventurer freely. And from what I hear, the relationship of the people in the school are troublesome, and there's not a lot of things to study." [Ryouma]

As I said that, Miyabi-san sighed deeply.

"Haa~, so ya knew, huh?" [Miyabi]
"Oh, did you also know about it?" [Ryouma]
"Naturally, I have ta go this year after all. So it's a given that I'd at least gather some information about the place. That and dad also told me all sorts about it." [Miyabi]
"I see… and then? Why did you want me to enter too?" [Ryouma]

"Well tat's cuz, Ryouma-han's personality is nice, and if there were someone I knew there, my life would be easier. People there are really stiff, ya know? And more than anything, I specialize at magic. Once I go there, a bunch of annoying nobles will have their eyes on me." [Miyabi]
"If it's so bad, why go?" [Ryouma]
"It's cuz I need ta make contacts as a merchant. That academy makes a point of not discriminating between

nobles and commoners, so it's easier ta get close ta the nobles there compared ta other places. Well, even then, it's not like there's really no discrimination… but at least we can talk casually. Speaking of which, Ryouma-han, you also specialize at magic, right? How reassuring." [Miyabi]

For her to be this determined at this age… merchants are scary. But it seems the number of students who enroll with this sort of objective isn't few. Well that aside, is Miyabi-san so good at magic for others to envy her?

"So magic is your specialty?" [Ryouma]
"That's right, but not as good as Ryouma-han. I am at the level where I can use a mid-level magic, but for students this is plenty good." [Miyabi]

Apparently, according to Miyabi-san, there are plenty amongst the students who can't even use low-level magic after enrolling, and have to learn the foundations there in the school. So with that crowd in mind, someone who could use a mid-level magic is more than good enough to shock them, right?

Speaking of which, beastmen fox tribe people seem to have a lot of magic power despite being beastmen. If I'm correct I heard this from someone at the guild… anyway, I wonder if it's because of this that Miyabi-san is good at magic.

In this world there are little to no persecution or discrimination towards other races, so there are no problems even if someone is a half. So she shouldn't have anything to worry about regarding that. In fact if you use race as an excuse to discriminate against someone, you'll instead get frowned upon. Apparently there was plenty of discrimination in the past, but the otherworlders that came before me worked hard to get rid of it. Well there are still some jealousy and envy when it comes to the strengths of the other races though.

"I see." [Ryouma]
"Well, if ya can't go, then it can't be helped. It's not good if I force ya to go too, and besides, it's not like I really expected anything. I just intended to introduce ya ta some good nobles if ya were going, so that ya don't find yourself caught up with some annoying nobles." [Miyabi]

Ahh, so she was thinking of helping me out. Miyabi-san's not a bad kid at all. It seems like it'll be difficult from now on, but do your best, I'll support you.

After that, I continued to make furniture. I got help from Miyabi-san with the easier parts, and like this we was able to finish making the furniture and the tools.

After finishing making the furniture, I told Miyabi-san that I'm going to the adventurer's guild, so she should go back to the store. But then she told me this.

"Ryouma-han, there aren't really a lot of jobs in the adventurer guild of this town, ya know? It's mostly just chores in the town, gathering herbal plants in the fields, or hunting small animals." [Miyabi]
"Eh, really? But I heard that there was a strong magical beast that appeared near here." [Ryouma]

Could it have already been hunted?

"Ah~, so ya heard about that? It's because of that, that only E Rank up are able ta go north." [Miyabi]
"Is it that strong?" [Ryouma]
"Nah, actually a D Rank party is more than enough. But there really ain't a lot of adventurers in this town that's above E Rank." [Miyabi]

Apparently, because this town has the dragon guild, wyverns and other large-type magical beasts appear frequently, causing many of the magical beasts in the area to flee. With an unprofitable town like this, it's only a given that the adventurers wouldn't stay here.

And the guards just stay at the garrison and watch over the gate, so it's quite problematic during times like these… Well whatever, in any case, it's because of that, that only E Rank adventurers up can go north. Whew, it's good that it's not requiring D Rank up.

"So as long as you're E Rank, you can go right?" [Ryouma]
"That's right, you'll be able ta at least grab some herbs there in the northern woods… oh right, Ryouma-han, you're E Rank, right? I won't tell ya not ta go, but be careful. If ya see that magical beast, ya better run immediately, alright?" [Miyabi]

After that, I gave my thanks to Miyabi-san, and headed towards the guild. Naturally, it's quite difficult for a girl

who's not an adventurer to go the adventurer's guild, so she didn't bring me there this time.

When I got to the guild, I headed towards the reception desk, and gathered some information. I got my information from a male employee. He looked to be the type who does his job without much care. When I showed him my E Rank guild card, he, without checking my age or appearance, quickly went and brought back only the jobs for E Rank up. I also ended up getting information on the magical beast. Apparently, it's a strong magical beasts that's known as Smash Boar.

If I recall correctly, a smash boar is a short horned pig. Its body is big, and it's plenty tough, its skin is also thick, so you can't deal a fatal damage to it if your strength is superficial.

If you're wondering why I know this before even being told about it, well it's because it was written there in the letter I got from Gayn and the others when I first came to this world. Along with the information of my lineage in this world and my grandparents, was to fight a smash boar once if I have the chance before going to my grandparent's village.

And apparently, the smash boar in this town is exactly the same as the smash boar I'm thinking about. It wasn't possible to accept the subjugation request for the smash boar, so I got an herb collection request near the place where the smash boar appears instead. Then afterwards, I went back to Pioro-san's store. Along the way, I recalled the contents of the letter…

The name of the village your grandparents lived in is Cormi Village. That village lies within the thick forest known as The Great Forest of Shurus.

The Great Forest of Shurus is a treasure house of medicinal plants. And you can find precious stones with good quality inside the caves of the great forest.

It was in order to acquire those things that many villages were built around and inside that thick forest, serving as a stopping point. The Cormi Village is one of those, and it was because of that, that your grandparents lived there.

But The Great Forest of Shurus is also a nest of monsters, making it a perilous forest. Even in the shallow parts of the forest, the weaker monsters are all D Rank up. Moreover, the adventurers who went there to collect herbal plants or mine precious stones that were killed, have had their remains turned into undead, and are loitering around the forest as zombies, skeletons, or ghosts.

That's why, along with the will of your grandparents for you to inherit their belongings as well as for you to continue your grandmother's research, is a warning that you must train in magic and get used to your body before going to the village.

It's not impossible for me to go the village right from the start with only the martial arts and Qi Gong that I had with me when I got here into this world. However, if I were to have happened upon a ghost, who is immune to physical attacks, then it's not guaranteed that I would have been able to come back alive. That's why I began training myself in the Forest of Gana… During that time, I got caught up in my hobbies, and passed three years… I've been thinking of going since I got out of the forest. But before that, I need to prepare.

I went back to Pioro's store while thinking that. When I got back, I had supper there as well today.

During mealtime I talked to Pioro-san about my plans to go the north tomorrow, at which Pioro-san replied, "Going north? So you're finally going ta hunt the smash boar then?" Right after Pioro-san said that, Miyabi-san hit him with a tsukkomi, while his wife, Kurana-san, rebuked him with a frightening smile.

The smash boar is nothing but practice for me, but for Pioro-san, it's an obstacle for his business, and at the same time a good product. Apparently, the smash boar's meat is not only odorless, but also soft, and delicious.

In case I end up hunting the smash boar, I should take it to this store. It's true that I didn't take the subjugation request, but just because I didn't take it doesn't mean I can't fight it. After all, it can't be helped if while gathering herbal plants I end up fighting with it. No one wants to be killed without fighting back after all, so there's no need to hold back if I happen upon the smash boar by chance. It's not like anyone would complain if I accidentally end up meeting the smash boar and end up killing it, right? …Hmm? Was my personality always like this? I wonder if I'll end up rustling the ruffians around here… I better take care…

After supper ended, I went back to my room, and prepared for tomorrow.

Chapter 10

The next day.

"Be careful!" [Miyabi]

Miyabi sent me off, and I headed towards the north gate. I leisurely walked, taking my time to enjoy the scenery of the lively town, but as soon as I got close to the gate, I braced myself.

They're restricting access, so people aren't being allowed to pass through the gate. But there won't be any problems so long as one is able to provide proof of being an E Rank adventurer. From here I should go to a place with plenty of plants that's near the smash boar's last known sightings, and begin gathering herbs there.

I have a bow and knife equipped. I've also prepared a spear in my 'Item Box', but I'm not planning to use it. Spears and large swords are supposedly effective against smash boars, but I'm fighting it under the pretense of having accidentally stumbled onto it, right? Then in order to keep up that pretense, I can't be using a weapon tailored for fighting against it now, can I? Otherwise, I'll get suspicious.

And so I went on my way to gather herbs… however, I can't seem to find the smash boar at all.

I know that just because it's a magical beast whose whereabouts are generally easy to find, doesn't mean that it's going to stay in places where there are plenty of herbs all the time, still… this has to be first time I've had to deal with a prey that's so hard to find. I've even used search magic, but I can't find it at all. Or rather, even the other magical beasts are missing. It's exactly just as Miyabi-san had mentioned, there're almost no magical beasts around here.

After that I went to gather some more herbs in other areas while I continued to look for the smash boar. After some time I finally managed to gather enough. The deadline for this request is still the day after tomorrow, so it's not like there's really any need to finish it today. But, well… apparently because of the rank restriction on the northern gate, the supply of these herbs has been dwindling, and because it's not easy to get these kind of herbs anymore, apparently they'll be purchasing all the herbs I can get. I figured that since there wasn't any harm in getting more herbs I could go get more , but right as I thought that, I heard a small voice.

"—— Uwaaah." [Someone]

A person's voice? It's a bit far though? Or am I just imagining things?

"———— Help me ——" [Someone]

… There it goes again! It's not just my imagination, someone's asking for help!

I grabbed my bow, heightened my senses as I minimized my own presence, and headed towards the direction of the voice. There I saw two adventurers being chased by the smash boar.

But… rather than a boar, isn't this a pig? It does have some fangs, but they're quite small, and it's not even sharp either. The only thing this pig has going for it is that it's a little bigger than I thought. Hmm, I guess it's about the size of a cow.

Wait a moment… this isn't the time to be thinking about this!

Carefully timing my shot, I nocked my arrow and let one fly between the trees. The arrow flew sharply, slipping through the woods, smashing the thinner trees, and as the smash boar passed by, the arrow pierced its right eye. Immediately, the smash boar went into a rampage as its death throes resounded throughout the area.

Noticing the smash boar's behavior, the two adventurers stopped moving and looked back.

What are these two doing!?

"Don't stop! Keep on running!" [Ryouma]

When the two heard me, they looked my way and were flustered. I tried calling out to them again, but it was no good. And the smash boar, after getting back up to its feet, already had its gaze locked onto my direction.

It's a bit different from what I planned, but…

I put the bow onto my back. And as I stared at the smash boar, I let the Ki move throughout my body.

The smash boar was like a pig with short, dull fangs protruding from both sides of its lower jaw. The fangs aren't venomous, but the strength of those fangs from a head-on collision still isn't something to be scoffed at.

The main problem is its constitution. It might be a pig, but its size is around 1.5 times that of a cow… probably. Anyway, the point is that it's covered by thick meat all over. Its body is full of cuts, so those two adventurer's must've cut it a lot, but… Forget the inner organs, I don't think those cuts have even managed to reach the muscles.

Since attacking the body seems useless, then… the aim should be where the meat is the least! The head!

"Buooooooooo!" [Smash Boar]

The smash boar bellowed out a war cry as it charged towards me. It moved at a speed that made the trees look like nothing but nuisances. In response, I moved to my right and dodged its charge. The smash boar was caught off-guard by my sudden movement, and ended up crashing into the tree immediately behind me. That powerful charge easily mowed down that tree, and the smash boar began to charge towards me again.

This time I moved to the left, and as the smash boar passed by me, I hit its temple with Ki strengthened palm strike.

"Piggy!!?"

The smash boar whimpered as it came to a halt. I know from hitting it just how thin the meat was in that area, no wonder it was so effective.

Next, it shook its head, and tried to impale me with its fangs, but I easily dodged that with a single step, leaving its left temple wide open. I threw a kick at that opening, and the smash boar whimpered again.

"Pi, ggy…" [Smash Boar]

Looks like it was more effective this time as the smash boar broke its right foreleg, and is now lying on the ground. Not giving it time to rest, I began my counterattack.

With an uppercut from my left, I sent the smash boar's head flying. While still in mid-air from the impact, I grabbed its fangs with the same hand, brought it down, made it spin counter-clockwise, and finished it off with a right elbow strike.

As my elbow sunk into the smash boar, I felt and heard the bones being crushed. The smash boar's feet shook for a moment, and afterwards it immediately fell over, unmoving.

Whew… Did I kill it…? Well, from the looks of things, that seems to be the case.

After I confirmed that I'd killed the smash boar, the two people from a while ago called me as they walked towards me. I didn't notice it a while ago because of the distance and the armor, but apparently one of the adventurers was a woman..

"U-Umm!" [Adventurer 1]
"Thank you very much for saving us!" [Adventurer 1]
"Eh, ahh… you're welcome. Are you hurt anywhere?" [Ryouma]
"No, we're fine, thanks to you." [Adventurer 2]
"But one of our friends is still injured, and is over there. We haven't been able to thank you yet for saving us, but please let us go help our friend first." [Adventurer 1]

Well if someone's injured we can't just leave them alone.

"Of course, and if you don't mind, could I come along as well? After all, I can use healing magic." [Ryouma]
"Really!?" [Adventurer 1]
"Thank you very much! Please!" [Adventurer 2]
"Ah, but we can't leave the smash boar here by itself alone, huh?" [Ryouma]
"By the way, you are?" [Adventurer 2]
"Please pardon my delayed introduction, I am Ryouma Takebayashi." [Ryouma]

"Ryouma-kun, right? Then Ryouma-kun, please stay here. We'll go and bring our friend here ourselves." [Adventurer 2]
"There are some malicious adventurers around here, so please be careful." [Adventurer 1]

Said the two as they left. Malicious adventurers? Isn't that a flag?

While I thought of that, I drained the blood from the smash boar while they weren't around. Of course, I used the bloody slime. After the blood was fully drained, I put back the bloody slime into the 'Dimension Home', and brought out two heal slimes in its place.

In the end, no malicious adventurer came, and the two adventurers from before carried back an injured female swordsman. She was in pain, covered in cold sweat. At least her internal organs seem to be safe. Together with the heal slimes, we casted 'High Heal' on her many times over.

" 'High Heal' 'High Heal' 'High Heal' 'High Heal' …" [Ryouma]

And after a short time passed, the female swordsman's treatment was over. Apparently she took the smash boar's charge head-on and was sent flying into a tree. As a result the bones of her feet and shoulder were broken. Fortunately, her internal organs were safe. After the treatment ended, her countenance changed for the better, and she was able to get up.

"Really, thank you very much!" [Adventurer 1]
"Thank you, thanks to you I was saved…" [Adventurer 3]
"You're welcome, but your lost strength won't be back for a while, so please don't push yourself." [Ryouma]

The wounded female swordsman was named Philly, the two being chased by the smash boar were Ken and Lurie for the male and female adventurers respectively. The three haven't officially made a party or anything, but since they all lived in Renauph, they were all well-acquainted with each other, and they decided to do their jobs together.

"Something like this is nothing. Thanks to you and your heal slimes." [Philly]
"You've helped us so much, and yet there's nothing we can repay you with." [Lurie]
"For the meantime please take this. I know it's not enough, so we'll pay the rest after coming back to the town." [Ken]

Said Ken-san as he handed over a small bag with money inside. I don't really need it since I don't have any problems with money, but these three are E rank adventurers, and they shouldn't have a lot of disposable income… so for the meantime, I better just accept this and end it with this.

"Thank you, but you don't need to pay any more than this. In exchange, how about just telling me about those malicious adventurers you were talking about a while ago?" [Ryouma]
"Is that really alright?" [Ken]
"I don't think just this is enough to repay you for everything, but… alright. Normally we do jobs as a three-man team, but today there were two others.」

Listening to the their story, they apparently met a pair of C Rank adventurers from another town at the bar, they got along well, and the C Rank adventurers asked them to be their guide for them to find the smash boar.

In exchange, they were to help them become better fighters, help them pile up some experience, and give them a small part of the reward.

"We had them show us their guild cards, and it was definitely C Rank. Just in case something went wrong, we recorded and checked their guild cards. But nothing was written on the records, so we figured nothing bad would happen." [Lurie]
"The compensation and the money were just right after all." [Ken]
"But then they made us fight using "piling up some experience" as an excuse. And when things turned for the worst, they used us as decoys and ran away by themselves. I was sent flying, and ended up unable to move, so in order to protect me, these two caught the smash boar's attention and ran away. The rest is as you know." [Philly]
"So that's how it is." [Ryouma]

Were they tricked? Well, an adventurer using someone as a decoy and running away by himself is definitely not a good adventurer. At the very least, I don't think these three are lying. Besides, these two were being chased by the smash boar, and the other one's seriously injured to the point of being unable to move… No matter how you look at it, this's just too much effort for a lie.

"Umm, is it really ok with just this? You definitely need some cash as–" [Lurie]
"It's fine, it's fine. Besides, I'm the one who proposed to use healing magic. Just consider this as service, ok?" [Ryouma]
"But…" [Lurie]
"Lurie, I know you feel sorry, but it's just as rude to force the issue. Let's just accept Ryouma-san's offer here." [Philly]

While listening to Philly-san, it suddenly hit me.

"Ah, right. If you don't mind, could you guys help me carry this smash boar back to the town?" [Ryouma]

It is a hassle to carry it all the way alone after all. I mean, it's gotten way lighter now that it's been drained of blood, so I can carry it as long as I strengthen my body with magic or use Qigong, but my body is still quite small, so no matter what I'll end up dragging it. Even if I did put it inside the 'Dimension Home', I'll still end up dragging it.

"Something like that's no problem." [Ken]
"We'll help!" [Lurie]
"Thank you." [Philly]

Like this, I received their help, and we carried the smash boar all the way to the town. The people at the gate were quite shocked, but I gave them a simple explanation, and we were able to pass through. And so, we walked like that until Pioro-san's store.

A lot of people obviously stared at us along the way, but we managed to arrive at the store safely in the end. But then the customers at the store saw what we were carrying, and they made a fuss. Because of that even the store's employees went out, and amongst them were Pioro-san and the others.

"Ryouma-han!? What's that big thing you haf there!?" [Miyabi]
"Ah, Miyabi-san, thanks for all your effort today. This is a smash boar by the way." [Ryouma]
"I can figure that out b'myself, ya know!? What I'm askin' ya is why there's a smash boar here! I told ya it'd be dangerous, and yet ya still fought it!?' [Miyabi]

It was Pioro-san who calmed down the overexcited Miyabi-san, and Ken-san and the others were the one who explained to them what had happened.

"So in other words, it's our fault that he fought the smash boar." [Ken]
"I don't know what would've happened if he hadn't come to save us." [Philly]
"Please don't blame him too much!" [Lurie]

Said the three with their heads bowed. Seeing that, Miyabi couldn't help but sigh.

"So ya saved some people, did ya? *Sigh, I guess it can't be helped then." [Miyabi]
"Doesn't seem like Ryouma fought recklessly too, so just let him go, alright?" [Pioro]
"Sorry for worrying you." [Ryouma]
"Seriously, *sigh… anyway let's leave it at this. That aside, dad! If we don't do somethin' 'bout this meat soon it'll go bad!" [Miyabi]
"Oh right! We can't leave it here, hurry! Bring it inside!" [Pioro]

Following his words, we brought the smash boar to the butcher that Pioro-san led us to. As the butchers began to cut the smash boar, Kurana-san came to tell us to wait for a bit. Someone from the adventurer's guild apparently came.

"What did they come for? Couldn't ya have them wait for a bit? We're busy right now, ya know?" [Pioro]
"They said that they want to investigate that smash boar. They just want to confirm that the smash boar rampaging in the north's been subjugated." [Kurana]

Come to think of it, I did mention that I'm going to sell it at the Saionji Firm… I guess the guards must've informed the guild then.

After that, a short while passed, and the male employee I met yesterday entered the store.

"Welcome." [Pioro]
"My apologies for intruding on you while you're busy. I've only come here to confirm that the smash boar's

been subjugated, and will be leaving immediately afterwards." [Adventurer Guild Staff]

As the male employee said that, he went around the smash boar, inspecting it, and after breathing out a sigh of relief, he said this.

"This is definitely the smash boar. Thank you for your cooperation. With this, we'll be able to lift the entry restriction on the north gate." [Adventurer Guild Staff]

Continuing, the male employee turned our way, bowed, and said this.

"Please accept my deepest gratitude for subjugating the smash boar. Now, the north gate will be back to normal again." [Adventurer Guild Staff]

The three adventurers quickly explained what happened to the male employee. The male employee having understood the situation, planned to deal with the issue.

"So that's what happened... I'll need a written evidence, so could the three of you come with me? And Takebayashi-sama, you may also come to the guild at any time with a part of the smash boar's body to receive the payment for subjugating the smash boar." [Adventurer Guild Staff]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

The three adventurers gave their thanks one more time, and then they left with the male employee.

After sending them off, we went back to the butcher. There, the butchers were waiting, already ready to butcher the smash boar.

"We had a bit of intermission there for a bit, but now we're good to go, begin!" [Pioro]
"Yes!" [Butchers]
"Ryouma, is it ok ta sell all these to our store?" [Pioro]
"Yes. I don't know any other store to sell it to anyway. Ah, but would it be alright to keep a portion for myself? I'll sell everything else though." [Ryouma]
"Of course, somethin like that 's no problem at all, right everyone?" [Pioro]

At those words, all the butchers in the room nodded. But as the butchers began to work, they suddenly raised their voices in disbelief.

"What's wrong?" [Pioro]
"This boar… no blood is coming out of it." [Butcher]
"What did ya say? Did tha blood coagulate? But if that were the case, then a drop of blood should at least be drippin', right?" [Pioro]
"No, not even a drop is dripping out." [Butcher]

When he said that, Pioro-san went to check the meat, and he wringed its neck.

Ah! Oh yeah, I forgot! I'd already drained its blood with the bloody slime…

"Umm… actually that's because I drained its blood." [Ryouma]

When I said that, immediately, all of them stared at me.

"Ya drained its blood? With these few wounds? And ya even managed ta do it while keeping it this clean?" [Pioro]
"I have a special method you see. By any chance, would you happen to know of the slime called bloody slime?" [Ryouma]

When I mentioned that, one of the butchers raised his voice.

"That's a slime that manipulates blood, right? I remember one being found in the forest when I was a kid." [Butcher]
"Yes, that's exactly it." [Ryouma]
"Ta think there was actually a slime that dealt with blood… Ryouma, did ya have that slime suck the smash boar's blood out?" [Pioro]
"Yes, I always do so for all the preys I hunt. The smash boar was a bit big though, so it took quite a bit of

time. The meat doesn't seem to have any problems, but could it be that it's no longer purchasable because of that?" [Ryouma]
"The meat's definitely fine. I've also used identify on it meself. And problems you say? Forget problems, this meat here is one helluva of a high quality meat. In fact, it's enough ta make me want that slime of yours." [Pioro]

After that I spoke with Pioro-san more about the details surrounding the bloody slime. But I only have one with me right now, and they also didn't have any slave demon magic users to contract with the beast, leaving them no choice but to leave the bloody slimes that has split off alone by itself, uncontracted. And amongst all others, not having a slave demon magic user around leaves a huge chance for problem to arise, so in the end we decided it'd be best for me not to give them a bloody slime for now.

Well, in the future, once the bloody slime splits, and Pioro-san manages to find a trustworthy slave demon magic user, then I won't mind handing them one. It's also necessary in order to spread the value of slimes, and besides, it's Pioro-san's store, I can definitely rest assured leaving it here. The bloody slime is also different from the cleaner slime and the scavenger slime in that there's a possibility that they can be found elsewhere. So there's not a whole lot of reason to monitor these guys.

While I was thinking that, the butchers finished butchering the smash boar. I got my portion, and sold off the rest of the meat. I got a middle gold coin from the exchange, and at the same time, I also retrieved the proof of subjugating the smash boar, its fangs.

Today was quite exhausting, so I'll leave handing in the gathered herbs to the guild tomorrow.

Chapter 11

The next day.

Pioro-san gave me some miso and soy sauce in the morning. Afterwards I thanked him, and I threw the lot into my 'Item Box'.

Then I went to the guild to submit the fang of the smash boar and the herbs I gathered yesterday. And immediately, I was able to receive the compensation for both. Looks like the male employee had properly informed them just as he said he would.

I went out of the way to make it look like a coincidence, even going as far as to equip the wrong equipment, but apparently it wasn't necessary… Then again, I'm just saying that because of how things turned out. Normally it wouldn't have been strange if they pursued the matter a bit, but I did save Ken-san and the others, so let's just consider it a good thing that they're not pursuing the issue.

While I was thinking that, the employee in charge came back with the compensation, and along with it, a word of gratitude. Apparently he's a friend of those three yesterday. Taking the opportunity, I asked about what happened to the two adventurers, and apparently they've already been caught.

From what I'm told they were overheard at the bar by some guild employees who were there drinking after work. Those employees informed the guild, and the two adventurers were quickly apprehended. After that, the investigation found out that they were in fact guilty, and that their guild cards were masked. Being guilty of other crimes, the guild decided to excommunicate them. And having committed the crime of masking their guild card, they will be serving over five years of forced labor in the mines, or work indefinitely as a slave.

When I heard about masking the guild card, I asked about whether something like that was really possible. And apparently it is possible to remove the punishments and information written on one's card, however it takes a special magic tool to do it, so a normal adventurer can't do it. Of course, the employee couldn't talk about how to aquire the means to mask one's card, so I wasn't able to get any more information other than that. Not that I want to mask my guild card or anything, but I should be careful.

After I thanked the employee for the reward, I left the guild. Now, what should I do? I've already finished everything that I needed to do here.

While I thought what to do from here on out, I walked to Pioro-san's store. There, I was informed that Pioro-san was looking for me, and was brought to Pioro-san's office. At Pioro-san's office, I drank the tea I was served while I listened to Pioro-san.

"Ryouma, would ya happen ta know any good dish with the smash boar's meat, miso and soy sauce as ingredients?" [Pioro]
"Dish, you say?" [Ryouma]

If you're talking about Japanese cuisine, then there's Tonjiru, Butashabu, Butadon, and pork fried with ginger.

"Well… I do know a few." [Ryouma]
"Could I have ya teach me? I mean don't get me wrong, fried fish and miso soup's plenty delicious, but it gets pretty tiring after a while, ya know? So I've always been thinkin' that I could sell miso and soy sauce more if there were more way ta use it." [Pioro]

So that's what it was. Well, it'll be convenient for me too if I could get Japanese food easier, so I guess I could teach him.

"Then how about some Por- I mean, how about some Smash Boar Fried with Jija?" [Ryouma]

There's pork, there's soy sauce, and there's even mirin. And I can get the ginger from a chemist! With this I won't be making the ginger-tasting meat I've been eating this past three years… but the real, unadulterated, one true pork fried with ginger dish!

"Ah, if ya don't mind, could I have ya cook this fried jija of yours? Ya can use as much of our ingredients as ya want." [Pioro]
"Is that ok?" [Ryouma]
"Of course, of course… after all, we're benefitting a lot from ya teaching us a new dish." [Pioro]

Like this it was decided that I'll be cooking lunch. But what surprised me was that Kurana-san and Miyabi-san will apparently also be cooking alongside me. "I thought I'd be teaching some servants," I said, to which to they laughed and said this,

"From time ta time, mom would drill in ta me how cooking is a woman's taste. So yeah… and besides it's not like I hate cooking or anythin', and it's not cool for the daughter of a company that sells food ta suck at cookin' either." [Miyabi]
"I'm looking forward ta Ryouma-han's skill and that new dish of yours." [Kurana]

Under the scrutiny of the two, I took the tools and ingredients that were prepared beforehand, and I began to cook.

First, comes grinding the rice and cooking it. Though, to be honest, I've never really gotten the opportunity to do this with a kilt back in my previous life.

To be eaten with the pork fried with ginger is Tonjiru, so I need to make that too to serve as a complement for the main dish. Then comes the dashi which I made from seaweed that's similar to Kombu and small fish. And for garnish are onions, great burdocks, mushrooms, and other various vegetables on smash boar meat. Ever since entering the towns, I've come to realize just how many vegetables being sold are similar to the ones in Earth, both in name and taste. It's highly possible that this too is a result of the otherworlders' influence.

While making the Tonjiru, Miyabi-san took charge of watching over the rice. And after I finished making the Tonjiru, I got a pot from my 'Item Box' and filled it with the excess Dashi. Then I added soy sauce, mirin, and vinegar into it. When Kurana-san saw that, she walked over and asked me a question.

"Ryouma-han, what is that?" [Kurana]
"It's seasoning made from soy sauce, mirin, dashi, and vinegar. If you leave it for a few days, the sour taste will mellow out, and it'll become quite delicious. And if you add the juice of Ramon to it, it'll become even more delicious. It can be used as dressing for salads, as well as seasoning for meat or fish." [Ryouma]
"Ta think was somethin' like that…" [Kurana]

Said Kurana-san as she looked into the pot. Not long after though, she immediately went back to the Tonjiru

After a while, the Tonjiru was almost ready… so I guess I should start working on the pork fried with ginger now.

I cut the smash boar's meat into thin slices, and then fried it on a frying pan. During that time, I grated some jija, and mixed it with an appropriate amount of soy sauce and mirin, mixing it into a sauce.

Adding that to the fried pork, and after a little mixing, the fired pork with ginger was done! It's simple and easy to make, but it's definitely delicious.

The pork fried with ginger can be made in many ways like marinating it with the sauce instead of doing what I did, but this is the method I prefer the most. After all, fast and delicious is the way to go.

Then for garnish, I cut some cabbage into thin strips, and then cut a tomato with a strange size that's bigger than a cherry tomato but smaller than a normal one into four pieces. Good. Next is the rice which should be finished around now…

As I was about to go over to the rice, I noticed a man with black hair at the corner of my eyes.

"Pioro-san? Since when have you been there?" [Ryouma]

Pioro-san came out from the shadow of the kitchen's entrance. It was quite awkward.

"Ah~, well the thing is, something delicious found its way ta my nose, and before I knew it I found myself here." [Pioro]

Ahh, of course. I mean with the rice's scent and the pork fried with ginger being cooked, anyone's appetite would be whetted, right?

"Dad, that's bad manners, ya know? If ya wanna watch, then just go in." [Miyabi]

I gave a sidelong glance to the dad that was being rebuked by his own daughter, and prepared the dishes for us four to eat.

"It's done." [Ryouma]
"Oh? Really? Then let's eat already." [Pioro]

The servants brought the food into the dining room, and we took our seats.

"Please, enjoy the Smash Boar Fried with Jija Set Meal." [Ryouma]
"It really looks good. Itadakimasu." [Miyabi]

Said Miyabi-san as she nimbly used the chopsticks and quickly put the pork fried with ginger in her mouth. Then in the next moment, her ears tensed, and with her eyes wide open, she said,

"Delicious! This is really, really, delicious!" [Miyabi]
"Oh wow, it's true. I thought it'd be delicious watching you make it, but looks like the real thing's even more delicious." [Kurana]
"This fried jija is also good, but what was this soup called? Tonjiru? Well, it's also delicious. And not only is it good, but since it has so much vegetables, it's also good for the body. If this kind of dish were to be widespread, then soy sauce and miso will definitely start to sell!" [Pioro]

Looks like they like it. Well, I'm happy they're enjoying it. I know Pioro-san's also somewhat thinking from a merchant's standpoint, but it looks like he's really enjoying it.

I tasted the dish I made while I explained it to them. And after eating, Pioro-san announced that the pork fried with ginger that he likes so much, will be added to the Fine Foods Store from evening onwards. And just as he had announced, the pork fried with ginger was there, recommended in one corner of the Fine Foods Store. He sure works fast…

The next day.

After having breakfast, I was about to go to my store, when a carriage stopped in front of the Saionji Firm.

Hmm? The things loaded on its roof rack are…

"Karla-san!" [Ryouma]
"Eh… Boss!" [Karla]

The one who responded to my voice was Karla-san. Apparently, because she had her back turned and was ordering other people, she wasn't able to notice me.

"So you've arrived. Well done, you must be tired from your journey." [Ryouma]
"Sorry for making you wait, boss. By the way, where's the store?" [Karla]
"It's that building over there that's separated by the road." [Ryouma]

I said, pointing to the store's location. In response, Karla-san gave orders to some people I don't know, and made them go to the store. Those guys are probably new employees. Afterwards, I brought Karla-san, Caulkins-san and the others with me, and dropped by Pioro-san's place to say hi. Finally, the store's getting started.

Four days after.

It took us two days to settle the details regarding the store, and after reviewing the work to be done, we opened on the third day. Interestingly enough, the work actually went smooth for a first day. But apparently, it's because they had given the new employees a crash course while travelling.

This new store has five new employees. One is exclusively for cooking, and the other four are clerks and at the same time bouncers. These four are apparently C Rank adventurers. When I asked why they decided to join the store, they said it's because they've started to see their limits as adventurers. Moreover, when they happened to meet a magical beast outside, they even lost two of their friends.

During that time, they just ran away and were only able to survive because of luck and because their two friends who died frantically tried to get the magical beast's attention when they realized they wouldn't make it anymore.

Having been able to survive, they ran to the guild, submitted information about that beast, and had it subjugated. And as luck would have it, there was an A Rank party in that town, allowing the quick subjugation of the magical beast. In order to settle their feelings, they went to take a look at the place where

the killer of their friends had died. But then they found out at the guild there that it was apparently a B Rank magical beast.

A magical beast that they couldn't fight against at all was only one rank above them. Moreover, it was easily hunted by a party of adventurers. After finding that out, they just gave up on becoming B Rank adventurers up. To begin with, even C Rank requests alone are already sufficient enough to make money. So they just did those while saving money. And at the same time, they looked for a workplace they could settle down with. It was then that they heard about my store.

Although these guys can't fight B Rank monsters, their strength is more than enough for handling ruffians. So there shouldn't be any problem with them working as bouncers.

Moreover, they also asked whether I was an adventurer or not. And then when they found out that I was, they told me of their experiences, and warned me to prioritize my safety above all else. They're good people. So I'm sure they'll get along just fine with other employees.

Incidentally, just a few days ago when the store had just opened, Ken-san and his group came over. There were barely any customers at the time, so taking the opportunity, I serviced them to get them as regular customers. I also explained to them how the store works, and also introduced to them the employees. But somehow they ended up talking about the case a few days ago regarding the smash boars, and Ken-san's story tugged at the heartstrings of the four employees, leading to them talking about various things, and the four giving advice to ken-san and his group. Actually, that talk about the employees being retired adventurers is something I only found out when I introduced them to Ken-san.

In any case, with nothing left for me to do, I left the branch store in Renauph to Karla-san, and went back to the town of Gimel.

Right now, Pioro-san and Karla-san along with the others are sending me off at the gate.

"Ryouma, do your best, ok? Because from now on's a match! A match of whoever can multiply his store the fastest!" [Pioro]
"Please take care." [Kurana]
"Boss, please rest assured and leave all the work here to us." [Robelia]
"We'll learn how to manage a store as soon as possible, boss!" [Tony]
"Don't worry, and just leave things to us. Wasting money like what had happened before won't happen anymore, and I'll definitely show you a prospering store!!" [Caulkins]
"Boss, please take care of your body." [Karla]
"You too, take care of yourself, alright?" [Ryouma]
"Ryouma-han, it's no good to push yourself too hard, ya know? I don't know when we'll get ta meet again, but don't die, ok?" [Miyabi]
"Of course, I won't die just yet." [Ryouma]

After all, I still have my grandparents' inheritance, their research, the matter regarding the slimes, and my promise with Elia. Oh, speaking of which, Miyabi-san's going to the Imperial Capital's Academy in half a year, right? Then in that case she might meet up with Elia.

Elia did say she didn't have friends, and Miyabi-san is going there to meet with nobles, so…

"Oh right, Miyabi-san." [Ryouma]
"Yeah?" [Miyabi]
"You'll be going to the academy at the Imperial Capital this year, right?" [Ryouma]
"Yep, what about it?" [Miyabi]
"Then in that case, I have a request." [Ryouma]
"What is it? If it's something I can do, then go ahead." [Miyabi]
"There's a girl who will be enrolling this year named Elialia. If you could, please be good friends with her. She's a good kid, and she's also a noble. And also please tell her, "Do your best!" for me." [Ryouma]
"Well we can't have such a nice kid getcaught up with some no good bunch now, can we?" [Miyabi]
"Thank you very much. Miyabi-san, please do your best." [Ryouma]
"Of course. You do your best to, ok?" [Miyabi]

I bowed my head to everyone who came to see me off, and I went on my way back to Gimuru.

Chapter 12

One month since returning from Renauph.

When I woke up, I went out to the storefront where the morning's brisk, blue sky greeted me. It's been quite hot lately, so this is a nice change of pace. It's also that time of the year where adventurers who use ice magic make the most. So if ever you happen to drop by the guild, you'll spot quite a few excited adventurers.

A good weather like today shouldn't be spent inside the mines. And since I've been doing nothing but treating those waterproof cloths since I came back from Renauph, I'll be taking the day off.

With that, I dressed myself, and I went to the town.

I thought of dropping by the store, but the door was closed. Then I remembered that starting from this month, the store will be having regular holidays.

Oh well, I guess it can't be helped. Like that I walked aimlessly around the town. When all of the sudden, a neighbor called out to me.

"Well if it isn't Ryouma? What cha doing?" [Poline]
"Ah, Poline-san. Good morning. The store is closed for the day, so I've decided to spend the day walking around the town. After all, it'd be a waste to spend such a nice morning cooped up indoors." [Ryouma]

Said I, as I walked towards her. At which, Poline-san chuckled.

"Certainly. A weather like this shouldn't be wasted cooped up indoors. By the way, since you're free today, why don't you drop by my husband's store? He'll have some feed for your slimes." [Poline]
"Thank you as always." [Ryouma]

Following Poline-san, I received some blood, bones, and meat from Zeke-san. There're quite a bit this time around, so I'm guessing it must be because of the hot weather.

They've been a real huge help to me, so maybe I should give them a refrigerator as thanks. But on second thought, let's not. That so-called refrigerator stops being a refrigerator when I'm not around after all, so if I gave them one it'd just be a hassle for me. While I was thinking that, someone suddenly shouted in the store.

"Mom!" [Rick]
"I can hear you just fine without the shouting!" [Poline]

The owner of that voice was Poline-san's mischievous child, Rick.

"Oh, you were here, Ryouma?" [Rick]
"Good morning, Rick." [Ryouma]
"At least greet properly!" [Poline]

Poline-san poked Rick. And Rick rubbed the place he was poked.

"So, what did you want?" [Poline]
"Oh, right! Toll's arrived, so I'll be going now!" [Rick]
"Oh, it's that time already?" [Poline]

Hmm? Rick's going somewhere?

"Where's Rick headed to?" [Ryouma]
"Ryouma, you didn't know? Today's the cleaning day for the church." [Rick]
"Once every two months, the children of this town have to clean the church and do some miscellaneous jobs." [Poline]
"We do it as thanks to god!" [Rick]

So community service in other words… When I think of it like that, I'm somewhat impressed by Rick, but Poline-san just smiled wryly and said this.

"Don't be fooled. My kid's not so benevolent as to do something with that in mind. He's just spouting some stuff he heard from somewhere. He's real aim is the giveaway candy." [Poline]

Rick looked the other way.

"That aside, are you going too, Ryouma?" [Poline]
"Well… I just heard of it today." [Ryouma]

Should I join? I mean, I don't exactly have anything planned so….

"Would it be ok if I went as well?" [Ryouma]
"I don't mind." [Rick]
"Then I'll go too." [Ryouma]
"Alright! Come with me then!" [Rick]

Said rick as he happily raised his right hand as he walked. After I said goodbye to Poline-san, I went after Rick.

"Ryouma! You're slow!" [Rick]
"Yes, yes. I'm coming." [Ryouma]

Rick talks cheeky, but he still waited for me. He might actually unexpectedly become a good brother figure who's able to take care of others.

Like this, I followed behind Rick, and met up with Reni and Toll in front of the church. Going in, the girl in nun clothing told us to go to the chapel by following the signs.

Just as she said, there were signs inside the church here and there. And inside the chapel was a huge crowd of children, and one woman who was in-charge of them. There are around sixty children in total. They seem to have attended out of their own will, but I wonder whether if this is supposed to be many or few for this town.

In any case, we'll have to sit and wait till the sweeping starts. So I sat with Toll and the others in the chapel, when suddenly light appeared before my eyes… light!?

"W-Where am I?" [Ryouma]

That's strange, even though I didn't pray, the light leading to the divine realm still came. And what's more is that this isn't the usual empty, white room.

"This is a library, right?" [Ryouma]

Surrounding me were numerous wooden bookshelves full of books. But the bookshelves stood not only on the ground, but also in the air. I had thought it to be only a normal library at first, but now that I've taken a better look, I suppose it's not…

"Oh? So it worked."

Looking for the unfamiliar voice, I looked up. And there, a thin, young man was floating downwards to where I stood. Well, I should greet him first before anything else.

"A pleasure to meet you, I am…" [Ryouma]
"I've heard of you. You are the new otherworlder, correct? Rumors of the otherworlder being quite interesting have been going around, you see." [Someone]

He knows that I'm an otherworlder. As expected, he is a god.

"I am the god of magic, Fer Noevir. And this space here is mine. It would appear that you are quite surprised at how different this world is compared to the time you met with the other gods. However, you do not need to be alert. It is the same divine realm you are used to. When time passes, you will return. Until then, why don't we enjoy ourselves?" [Fer Noevir]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

So this is the god of magic, Fer Noevir. According to Tekun, opportunities of meeting with this god is extremely rare.

"Don't mention it. Something to this effect is only a matter of fact. I've heard of the four gods you've met before calling the soul and consciousness of the living to this realm, and so I thought to take the opportunity to try it out myself. Naturally, I wouldn't do something crude such as being impolite to someone I called out

on my whim." [Fer Noevir]

From our conversation, I found out that he was in the middle of investigating why I'm able to come here. And by chance, I happened to be at the church, so he decided to take the opportunity and called me. In other words, an experiment.

"I'd be quite pleased if you'd answer some of my questions… do you mind?" [Fer Noevir]

I don't really have any reason to refuse. Or rather, since I can't refuse, I just replied by listening. The questions of the magic god started out from my lifestyle, both in my previous world and in this world, to silly questions such as my favorite food, to questions such as what I thought when I was first called here to the divine realm. And my opinions on matters regarding things such as slavery and war. All sorts.

For a while now I've just been listening, but I can't seem to find a pattern to his questions… Until finally, the last question came.

"Thank you for you cooperation. It's the last question but… what do you think of this world?"

What I think..? Since the questions are so vague, I'm not really sure how to answer. But I think it's a good world. Of course, I haven't gone around the world, and my information on it is also scarce. However, the people I've met so far have mostly been good people. And I've even made friends. Magic and slimes are also interesting, and my life's been prospering, so I don't have any complaints. With all that in mind, I think it was a good thing that I came to this world.

"I see… I understand now." [Fer Noevir]
"Huh? Did I… speak out just now?" [Ryouma]
"You didn't, I just read your mind." [Fer Noevir]

Read my mind!? …I didn't realize it at all…

"Sorry about that. I wanted to be on the safe side, so I read your mind." [Fer Noevir]
"Safe side?" [Ryouma]
"Unfortunately, not all of the otherworlders were like you." [Fer Noevir]

Apparently, there are those among otherworlders who drowned in the power they've been given, and committed all sorts of heinous acts. There were also those who, despite not having any malicious intent, ended up using their powers incorrectly and caused many tragedies. So it seems he's observing me. Well, I can understand where he's coming from. It really is dangerous after all to carelessly go on a rampage after having been given cheats.

"Exactly. As much as possible I don't want to bring people with dangerous thoughts into this world. The same goes for people who lose themselves to their power. Moreover, we can't really interfere with the otherworlders normally. The most we can do is have them stop with an oracle, and try to persuade them to make up for their sins. We can interfere in situations where the world's about to be destroyed, but those kind of situations are rare. Besides, it's already too late once the situation turns that grim… Anyway, I'm glad that you understand." [Fer Noevir]

He read my mind again.

After Fer Noevir explained to me while slightly complaining, he seemed to calm down.

"From now on, I'll be doing a lot of things, but I'll take care not to drown in power… My apologies for not being able to say outright that I'll absolutely not do so though…" [Ryouma]
"I can't trust someone who says something like 'absolutely' so carelessly. It's more than enough for you to think of keeping my advice to the best of your abilities." [Fer Noevir]
"Thank you very much. I'll continue to do my best from now on." [Ryouma]

After hearing those words, the usual light began to shine.

"Looks like the time's come. I'll give you one last advice. There is an abnormality awakening in your body… but it's not really something that rare. It's limited to otherworlders from earth, but more or less there is an inclination similar to yours." [Fer Noevir]

By abnormality, he's referring to how I went into this realm and went off with a divine tool, right?

"Is that true?" [Ryouma]
"I haven't identified the cause, but there are also people in the past who were able to do things that should

normally be impossible. It just so happens that you happen to have a similar inclination for some reason. It's precisely because Gayn and the others have a precedent that we know there's nothing wrong with your body or your mind. There were also other people who had that inclination, but there weren't any one who suddenly died or went mad." [Fer Noevir]

Come to think of it, Kufo mentioned of a saint dying and removing all diseases from this world. That's definitely not something that a person should normally be able to do.

…I haven't really been minding it, but I wonder if I was actually concerned? Since I'm actually quite relieved now that I've heard of these words that were spoken just now.

"Thank you for telling me that." [Ryouma]

At the same time I gave my thanks, the light wrapped around me, and I was brought back to the chapel.

I wonder if my voice reached him. I don't know the timing for leaving so I'm quite anxious.

What I was thinking might have come out on my face since Toll and the others told me, "You're making a strange face you know. Is something the matter?" To be honest, I completely forgot about these three…

After that, I tricked the three, and after waiting for a while, the woman who was in charge of the kids, thanked me along with the rest of the kids for participating. Looks like there's no debut for my magic and scavenger guys here. It'd be faster if I used those guys, but the kids are doing their best to clean up, so I can't just bring out the slimes just because they're more efficient. So I just brought out the normal tools, and swept like a normal person along with everyone else.

The sweeping took until afternoon. After we cleaned the church, we had sandwich for lunch. After that was time for the candies that Rick was looking forward to. We were given a pouch with a ribbon tied to it. Inside were four pieces of cookie. All the kids ate here, so I tried eating it too. The baked sweet smelled good and had just the right sweetness. It also had the strong fruit smell of something like jam added onto it. It was delicious.

After we finished eating the sandwich and the cookies, all the kids formed groups and started playing in the garden. At the same time there are those who seemed to be looking at the entrance of the church, waiting for something.

I get the kids who are playing, but what about the kids who are waiting for something? So I tried asking Rick and the others what they were doing.

"What are you guys doing?" [Ryouma]
"We're waiting for uncle!" [Rick]

The one who answered first was Rick. But that answer only told me that you're waiting for someone.

"After sweeping, there's an uncle who comes every time. That uncle teaches us swordsmanship and how to fight." [Toll]
"How to fight?" [Ryouma]

Hearing Toll's explanation, apparently there's a former adventurer who drops by after the kids finish sweeping. That person doesn't just donate to the church, but also hopes for the orphans who live in the church to be independent when they grow up and have to leave, so he teaches them how to fight free of charge. In other words, a volunteer. And because it's possible to learn how to fight for free, there're also kids who admire warriors who join the sweeping on the day of the church's cleaning.

Even if you say it's practice, taking into consideration the age, it's not at a level where it can be considered much. At least looking at from mine or any adventurer's perspective, but that can't be helped.

"I get Rick, but why do you two want to train?" [Ryouma]

Rick's a naughty boy so it doesn't feel weird when he wants to join the training. But as for Toll… well he doesn't strike me as that sort of person. Is it just because he's a young boy that he admires adventurers?

"It's not bad for girls to fight too, you know? I might get involved with some strange guy in the future, and I need to look after Rick too." [Reni]
"As for me, my mom told me to train my body a bit… I never intended to slacken that much though." [Toll]
"It's because your personality's so girly! If you train then you can become manlier!" [Rick]

"Y-Yeah…" [Toll]

I see… Or rather, Toll, aren't you just being pushed around?

As I thought that, the surrounding children grew noisy.

"He's here!" [Kids]
"Uncle!" [Kids]
"The scary uncle came!" [Kids]

Hearing that, I looked towards the entrance. And just as they'd mentioned, a man with a scary face was there, heading over here.

"Oi! Who said my face's scary!? That was uncalled for!" [Scary Uncle]

Shouted the man as he walked over our direction. It was the guild master of the adventurer guild, Wogan. Apparently by uncle they meant Wogan-san. The surrounding children seem to have already gotten used to Wogan and they didn't flinch at Wogan's loud voice. Rather, there were even some kids who clung to him.

While he was wrapped up with children like those, our eyes suddenly met.

"Oh? Ryouma. What're you doing here?" [Wogan]
"The store's closed today, so I thought I'd walk around the town to spend the day, but then I heard about the church's cleaning day, so I figured I'd participate. I thought an opportunity like this where I could be a part of the community and mingle with the others was a good thing." [Ryouma]
"Well that's certainly a good thing… Oh, right. Since there's still some time, how about you go and help me for a bit." [Wogan]
"Help?" [Ryouma]
"Yeah, come on, lend me your ear for a bit…" [Wogan]

After a while, I found out that he apparently wants me to help out with the training.

In the open area where children are gathered and separated according to ranking as they practiced their foundations, I took out from my 'Dimension Home' twenty scavenger slimes.

"Good! Today we'll do something more practical for your training! Ryouma!" [Wogan]
"Right." [Ryouma]

"Everyone! Today you'll have these slimes as your opponents!" [Wogan]
"The wounds will be treated with healing magic, so please don't hesitate, and go all out." [Ryouma]

I think the ones who'll be injured are the kids though. After all, I've been training the slimes until now, and they've also learned the Taijutsu and physical attack resist skills. Plus their opponents are just using wooden swords. With a child's strength to boot too. Yep, the slimes probably won't get hurt at all.

In any case, I had the slimes focus on dodging, and ordered them to only use their body slam for their attack, so the children should be safe. Body slams will only be able to trip people over at most after all.

"Ryouma, is it ok!?" [Rick]

As Rick asked that, I replied with a, "No problem." At which Rick expressed that he wants to go first. That wasn't a problem, so Wogan let him.

Rick wielded the wooden sword that children used. But his eyes were a lot more serious compared to the other children.

The scavenger slime didn't attack and instead waited for Rick to attack first. Rick looked on at the unmoving scavenger slime, and ascertained his aim. And then he swung his sword downwards. But because he's mostly only studied the form, his swing was wide open, and he had plenty of openings. But above all else, he was slow. He's a kid though so I guess it can't be helped… And as expected, the scavenger slime was able to dodge it.

Frustrated, Rick continued to attack at the slime. And in his frustration, his form gradually fell apart, until he completely forgot it and started just swinging his sword wildly. That went on for a while until Rick started tire. And when he brought his sword up, the slime took that opportunity and rammed its body into him perfectly. He's not hurt, but because he was lightly pushed away, Rick fell on his tushy.

"That's enough! Rick, your body's still too small, and you also haven't done proper training yet, so it can't be helped that you lost. But you shouldn't let the blood go to your head just because your sword missed. Just now, except for the first one, everything was a mess and you were full of openings. Next time, you should focus on making each movement as clean as possible." [Wogan]

Rick looked frustrated but he nodded his head, and went back to the observing children. After that, everyone took turns fighting the slime, and received Wogan's guidance. After that, Wogan divided the area and had them all battle with the slimes simultaneously.

During that time I took charge of healing with my healing magic. While Wogan-san patrolled and taught the children individually.

When it was almost dusk, the training ended.

After we sent the children off, Wogan-san and I were finally able to rest.

"Good work today." [Ryouma]
"Yeah, you too. Thanks for your help." [Wogan]
"Same here, actually. I took the day off, but I didn't really know what to do, so this turn of events was quite convenient. Also, regarding that matter… I'll leave it to you." [Ryouma]
"Information about the magical beast, right? No problem, leave it to me." [Wogan]

As compensation for my participation in today's training, I will be receiving information on various magical beasts in the future. I want to gather as much information as I can on the magical beasts in The Great Forest of Shurus before going. And also, although I've already become D Rank I want to become C Rank first before going, since that way I'll have an easier time entering the forest.

"It's payment for your service today, so I can have it ready by tomorrow. The information will depend on the subjugation request's contents though. Still… don't push yourself, ok? …Though since it's you, I think you'll do just fine and come back safely, but still… you shouldn't let your guard down. Also, if you don't mind, come help me train the kids again. Your slimes make for really good training partners after all. Accepting the training missions for new guild recruits from the adventurer guild's also fine." [Wogan]
"I'll have to refrain. I'm bad at holding back." [Ryouma]
"That so?" [Wogan]
"Yes. When I started training the slimes at first I ended up killing quite a few of them too." [Ryouma]
"… Oi, isn't that because you were fighting with slimes?" [Wogan]
"Eh?" [Ryouma]
"Slimes can be defeated even by kids as long as they have a weapon you know? If you can hold back enough not to kill that, then that's more than enough for a human. Or rather, if you hold back that much, then it won't be training. Besides, haven't you been capturing the people attacking you all this time?" [Wogan]
"…" [Ryouma]

Now that he mentions it!

"You realized it just now!?" [Wogan]
"Yes." [Ryouma]

Looks like, after training with the slimes, I've actually ended up being able to hold back without realizing it. I wonder why I haven't noticed it until now? … Maybe it's because I've hurt others before?

While we were talking, the nun brought us some drinks us thanks. And I gratefully accepted it. By the way, the woman who made my status board's apparently named Riera. And the young girl's named Bel apparently. Also this church's apparently being managed by only these two.

When I asked her if they didn't lack manpower, she said although it's not easy, she's being helped out by the orphans and the people in the town so there's no problem.

Moreover, she also asked me some questions. They wanted to raise some slimes in the church, so she wanted to know whether learning slave magic's difficult or not. Whether it's hard to raise slimes or not. And a bunch of other questions relating to slimes. I started off by answering her questions one at a time, until I finally couldn't take it and just asked outright, "Why do you want to raise slimes?"

"Because after today, I've come to realize just how cute slimes are." [Bell]
"And if I can safely secure them by slave magic, then it'll also be good as education for the kids." [Riera]

Is that alright!? To use slimes as education… back in my previous world the most we had were rabbits. Or

rather, this world actually had the custom of using animals as a form of education? For the meantime, it's not like she's already decided, and they just mentioned that they might do so later.

While we were talking it became dark. Now, I should go back and have supper at home. Drink some, and then sleep. Then tomorrow, I'll do my best again.

Chapter 13

Waking up on her assigned bed…

"Fina, wake up!" [Jeanne]
"Mn… Jeanne…?" [Fina]
"Good grief! Even though you're fine normally, why are you so bad at waking up?" [Jeanne]

… Ah… no good, I want to sleep again. Normally, it's no good to go back to sleep, but it's our off today, so…

"Have you already forgotten that everyone's going out to town today?" [Jeanne]
"Oh right!" [Fina]

From this month onwards, everyone will get a day off together once a week. So we decided to go out to town to play!

"I'll get dressed immediately, wait for me!" [Fina]

I hurriedly dressed myself, and went towards the employee's dorm lobby. There, Maria and Jeanne, two girls who left the same village I did for money, and our dormmate, Li Ling-san, were waiting.

"I'm ready! Sorry, I'm late." [Fina]
"Morning~" [Maria]
"Don't mind it." [Li Ling]
"It's the same as always anyway." [Jeanne]

I wanted to say something back, but it's true, so I can't deny it. Sigh… why am I so bad at waking up?

"Then, let's go!" [Jeanne]

As Jeanne said that, she took the lead, and we went out to town. Li Ling-san and Maria comforted me as we followed.

I started feeling better when we got out, and the four of us enjoyed ourselves in town.

For breakfast we bought food from the stall selling to the bachelor laborers. That store's main customers were manual laborers, so the serving was a little more than a meal for both me and Maria.

After eating, we went shopping for our daily necessities until noon, at which we looked around for clothes.

Who would've thought that we'd be able to live like this after leaving our homes? We're truly fortunate. Everyone who left said so, so I thought we'd end up working from morning until late in the evening every day and still end up without enough money.

Jeanne and Maria's probably thought of the same thing. But what actually happened is completely different. We were given individual rooms, Celma-san makes us delicious food, and our salary's high. Even after doubling the money I send back home, and despite eating out once a week and shopping, I still have enough left over to save.

From time to time, Maria has a tendency to be distracted, and once upon a time, she fell over and got hurt. But she was healed with healing magic. And according to Li Ling-san, even Fei-san's broken leg was healed. But what's more is that in both of these cases, they were healed free of charge.

Healing magic's normally not something used that freely. But in our store, we can receive that free of charge anytime. Ever since trouble's been around the store, the boss left the heal slime there permanently to help us.

In the past, the boss himself was the one managing. But when Robelia-san and the others were around, they were the ones managing. And after Robelia-san's group left to manage the new branch store, Maria's been left in charge of the heal slimes. Robelia-san said that it's an important slime, so I wonder if it was really ok to hand it over that easily. Still… it's certainly assuring to know that healing magic can be used anytime.

The place I work at is really good. When my parents sent me a letter asking and worrying about my workplace and my boss, I wrote them back not to worry.

"Fina, what are you dazing off for? Are you sleeping again?" [Jeanne]
"Sheesh, I'm plenty awake. How long are you going to keep pestering me about that?" [Fina]
"For the meantime, let's go to 'that' store." [Jeanne]

By 'that store' we mean the coffee shop that's recently been popular here in Gimuru. Their confections are relatively cheap, but more than anything, they're delicious. Maria and Jeanne wanted to go as soon as they heard the rumors, but we decided to go after shopping instead.

We took the seats by the window. And a female employee came to get our orders. During that time, Jeanne asked me,

"So… What were you thinking about a while ago?" [Jeanne]
"Nothing in particular, just how lucky we are is all." [Fina]
"Oh, so it's that. But yeah… a normally definitely wouldn't let us live this luxuriously." [Jeanne]
"We get to send lots of cash back home~, we get to rest~, what a great place to work at~" [Maria]
"Come to think of it, you three came from the same village, huh?" [Li Ling]
"That's right~" [Maria]
"But with no strong magical beasts, no special products, and a land that's not particularly healthy… it's just a poor village." [Fina]
"Since you're working away for your families, are you guys planning to leave this work eventually?" [Li Ling]

It's true that there're those who work away from home and eventually come back, but we have no plans of doing so.

"As long as the boss's fine with it, then we'll work forever~" [Maria]
"This job allows us to send more money than anything else, and more than anything, we don't know if we'll be hired again after retiring once." [Fina]
"After all, if the boss opens up recruitment, then form the looks of things there'll be a flood of applicants. Speaking of which, how about you and Fei-san? I heard you were peddlers in the past, but…" [Jeanne]
"Our country's very dangerous. Me and my dad, we don't plan on going back." [Li Ling]

What kind of country's Gilmar anyway? It's big but really far, so its name's about all I know about it. While living in the village, I thought it'd be a good idea to familiarize myself with the name of this country and the surrounding towns, so unfortunately, I couldn't get time to gather more information regarding the farther countries.

And from the looks of things, just like me, Maria and Jeanne also couldn't understand. I mean, I get that it's dangerous, but exactly how is it dangerous? Realizing that, Li Ling-san explained.

"For a long long time now, Gilman's been at war. Not with other countries, but inside. The different nobles inside have been warring on endlessly. Apparently, it's a scramble for the founder king's equipment. When the king died, the nobles immediately fought each other in hopes to gain it." [Li Ling]
"A war to steal a weapon?" [Jeanne]
"Not just a weapon, but also an armor and a helmet. Apparently, the all of the king's equipment have an amazing power concealed within it. And once one gathers all of those, then that person will receive power and become the strongest, gaining the right to rule the country… or so the story goes. But that story should be fake." [Li Ling]
"Even until now?" [Jeanne]
"Right now they're fighting for vengeance. After one succeeds, the other will start fighting for vengeance. Like this the cycle just repeats itself. And it's because of this that the country's a mess, and there're plenty of bandits. I don't have any relatives left in Gilmar, so Iplan to live in this peaceful country." [Li Ling]
"Then, let's do our best from now on together ~" [Maria]
"I look forward to working with you as well." [Fina]

As I was saying that, the tea and sweets came.

"Sorry for making you wait, here're your black tea and seasonal fruits pie." [Waitress]

Jeanne's and Maria's eyes sparkled when they saw the pie the waitress brought with her.

"It's here! It's here! I've wanted to eat this!" [Jeanne]
"Itadakima~su." [Maria]

Following after the two, I and Li Ling-san eat as well. And as soon as that pie entered my mouth, the indescribable sweetness and freshness of various fruits mixing spread inside my mouth. Delicious!

"Yep, just as rumored, this is good." [Jeanne]

"I'm in bliss~" [Maria]

Jeanne and Maria praised the food, and Li Ling-san agreed with them. After that, we continued to talk over tea and pie. And after finishing the conversation on clothes, Jeanne suddenly cut in.

"By the way, what do you guys think of our boss?" [Jeanne]
"What's this all of the sudden~?" [Maria]
"A letter came from the village, right?" [Jeanne]

True, a letter did come. A letter from our worrying parents arrived just a few days ago.

"In my letter, various things like, "Are your senior employees and boss treating you badly? Are they harassing you?" You know, various things pressing for my relationships in work." [Jeanne]

Well those kind of bosses do exist, so I guess it's only normal for even Jeanne's parents to be worried. My letter's also nonchalantly asking about those things.

"Of course, I wrote back that it's a good store, and that there're no men trying to use their position to woo me. But as for the boss, I don't really know much~" [Maria]
"Really?" [Jeanne]
"Well yeah, after all, I barely anything about him aside from being a good kid. All I know is that he has a lot of slimes, and that he lives in the mine inside a house he built." [Maria]

Now that she mentions it, that's certainly the case. Whenever we talk to the boss, it's mostly about the store's equipment, the customers' reception, and the salary of the employees. We barely talk of anything outside that.

And so, we all started to think for a bit after that. But in the end, we could only come up with, "He's a good kid." And we ended the conversation there. I should get to know the boss better, little by little. Li Ling-san and I don't plan on encroaching too much, but Jeanne and Maria look way too eager about this. I should probably take care not to be a bother.

As I was thinking that, we finished the tea and the sweets. Without noticing it, we've overstayed at the store, so we left. After that, we walked around the town for a bit, then we went back to the dorm.

My wallet got a bit lighter today, but something like this's no problem. Once I save up a bit, I'll go with the others to that store again.

Chapter 14

Three months later… (Half a year since parting with the duke and his family)

It's been so peaceful lately~…

The ruffians have mostly stopped attacking. Most likely, it's because more and more of their employers are being arrested. Without anyone to hire them, the ruffians won't have a reason to come.

Speaking of which, some of the arrested employers happen to be merchants. Apparently, because I'm a newcomer, some of them wanted to destroy my store to threaten me, and get me to join them so as to gain the secret behind my business. But because of that, the merchant guild found a reason to investigate their stores. As it turns out, they've apparently done the same thing to many other stores. Moreover, there are those amongst them who apparently have a connection with the dark guild. That news really shook Gimuru, and even caused unrest for some time. You might not think so, but several companies actually ended up being closed. So now, the guild's started to investigate even the branches and the main stores in the other towns. This case has really turned into a big one.

Fortunately though, the merchant guild covered for the affected stores and the people who've contracted with them, preventing anything too big from occurring.

To give an example, amongst those who've sent a thug to my store is the owner of a pharmacy who wanted to know how I made my deodorizing liquid. That storeowner seems to have been getting his medicine from an exclusively contracted chemist . But because of the recent case, that storeowner's been arrested and his store, closed, causing the chemists to be unable to conduct their wholesaling business. And now, they're jobless. But the guild master gave them some appropriate positions such as the ones in a wholesale store, and like that they managed to find a new job.

Amongst those workplaces that the guild provided is Serge-san's Morgan Firm. After all, Serge-san's store also sells medicine, so they had some room to hire some new employees.

Incidentally, the Morgan Firm was mixed up in the confusion of this case's uproar, and the firm managed to take the customers of the now closed store, greatly increasing their profits. After all, one of the stores that were closed were one of the rival stores of the Morgan Firm. The guild master said so herself, so there's definitely no mistaking it.

Going back to the main topic…

There hasn't been any problems lately, but in exchange, the number of cleaning stores that have opened recently in an attempt to imitate me has increased. Unfortunately for them though, their rate of mixing up the laundry and tearing it up is quite high. They're not able to wash away the dirt from the laundry that well either, so in the end they couldn't get a lot of customers. And even when the stores do manage to do a good job, because they're using human employees, they are unable to keep up with the salary, resulting in them barely making any profits. As a result, the branches tend to close quite frequently. But that's not my store's fault, so no problems came out of it.

The disturbances in the store have mostly stopped in this regard, but in a place I don't know, I've apparently begun to stir new trouble.

This is actually something I heard about since coming back from Renauph, but apparently Matthew stormed the merchant guild and demanded that the tamer guild be responsible for my store.

At the start, Matthew wasn't shouting or yelling, but because the guild master told him to cut his explanation short, he got mad at the guild master, and the few words he yelled was condensed.

Matthew's few words were hard to understand, so when he asked for a detailed explanation from the guild master, he was only given the main points.

There are other merchants like me in the merchant guild who use slave magic. Such people often transport goods by land or peddle to dangerous places. People like those and myself are somewhat in-between being a slave magic user and a merchant, but because we're doing business, we should still be under the jurisdiction of the merchant guild. And normally, the tamer guild shouldn't try to interject in such cases.

But of course there are exceptions, such as when the slave magic user's slave monsters go out of control or on a rampage. It's dangerous when magical beasts aren't handled properly, so disciplinary actions in regards to second hand offenses and recurring problems need to be handled swiftly, but those cases are rare. Moreover those cases are limited to when slave magic users are the cause of the problem or when the merchant guild itself is the one who requested the tamer guild's help.

But then in that case, I haven't even caused any problems once, and I haven't failed any jobs from the tamer guild either. Although to begin with, I haven't actually taken any jobs from the tamer guild. With no scandals to use, Matthew tried to force the issue by using my young age and my supposedly half-baked knowledge regarding slave magic, since it was only learned from my grandmother, as a reason to get me under the jurisdiction of the tamer guild. At the same time, he pestered the guild master with some shameless lie about how they need to take the future of young slave magic users into consideration or something.

"It's imperative that talented, young slave magic users receive appropriate guidance." [Matthew]
"Regardless how excellent a child is, there're bound to be problems with his management of magical beasts. And that's precisely why our tamer guild should guide them." [Matthew]

Or something like that.

Of course, the guild master just rejected that. But Matthew wouldn't give up, and he tried everything he could to try to butter up to the guild master as he proposed the same thing over and over.

"Doesn't this mean that Matthew's somehow involved with the disturbances?" is what I thought. But then it doesn't seem to make sense for him to talk directly to the guild master like this… Moreover, I don't really have any evidence that he employed the ruffians, but it is true that he's been somewhat troublesome. Still though, why is he being this direct? Doesn't he know that the guild master is my ally? Or is he really unrelated to the ruffians?

No matter how much I thought about it, I just couldn't seem to grasp what Matthew' was thinking, so I figured I'd just leave this to the guild master.

The guild master said that as long as she kept rejecting the requests, eventually Matthew will give up. But when she said that, a terrifying smile surfaced on her face. Most likely since Matthew's charade isn't hurting her in anyway, she plans to stay like this until he makes his move. But then at that time she'll be dealing with him thoroughly.

In any case, because of that I don't have any problems right now. And I've been spending my days training and completing some adventurer requests. There might be a storm brewing in a place I don't know of, but from where I am, everything's peaceful, and not a hint of typhoon can be seen.

But then all of the sudden, on such a fine day like that, I was suddenly called by the guild master of the adventurer's guild, Wogan-san, and was brought to his office.

"Ryouma, it looks like you've been doing well lately. There was a time when I thought you'd just work as a merchant, but it seems that's not the case." [Wogan]
"It just ended up becoming bigger than expected, so I just couldn't get my hands off of it. Being the owner, I can't really just leave problems lying around." [Ryouma]
"Well… that's true. Once you take a position that has authority over others, it doesn't matter whether you're suited for it or not, you have to take responsibility… Going to the main point though, are you free a week from now for two weeks?" [Wogan]

I don't have anything planned in particular. I've already stocked up on the cloth treatments too.

"Yeah, I'm free." [Ryouma]
"I see, then in that case I have a request. It's only a harvesting request, but because of the amount, space magic will be necessary. So can you take on the request as a transporter? The magical beasts you want to fight so much will also be appearing in the gathering points, so… Anyway, I'll give a more detailed explanation tomorrow after I gather people, so come tomorrow afternoon to the guild. If you feel like participating after hearing the details, then I'll register your name." [Wogan]
"I understand, I'll definitely come. By the way, what's the monster that's going to appear in that request?" [Ryouma]
"Treant." [Wogan]

A treant is a plant type magical beast that looks like a tree. They like to hide themselves amongst the trees, and prey on people and other magical beasts. There should be a lot of them living in the Great Forest of Shurus. There's a constant threat of surprise attacks from these magical beasts, so they're considered to be

very dangerous.

"I understand. I'll see you tomorrow afternoon then." [Ryouma]
"Yeah, take care."

I left the guild and went to the abandoned mine. And then some time after passing the northern gate, I opened my 'Dimension Home' and took out my iron slimes and my metal slimes. I've been running with these guys lately whenever I went back home or left the house.

At first, I thought these two's weakness was their slow mobility, but after some time had passed since taming them, their movements have gotten smoother to the point that there are now way more opportunities when I can take them along with me. I'm honestly quite surprised about that.

As for the impetus that changed them, well… at first I just had them try to change their body through training, but then they would just fall down from the slope of the mines all the time. But then, I suddenly realized something.

In those days, they weren't as flexible as the other slimes and were limited in their transformations, but it was still possible to make slight changes. At the same time, their bodies were also harder than the other slimes who were soft all over. Using those features of theirs that made them quite different from the others, I concocted a plan to make them more mobile.

With my new idea in mind, I ordered them to change their bodies into a ball. It's not really that much different form their original bodies, so they succeeded without a hitch, and the two of them turned into two balls that were slightly smaller than normal. Using this shape, the two slimes were able to move at a speed faster than the other slimes by relying on the slope. This was the beginning of their growth.

After that, one week of rolling down and crawling back up the hill passed. Then a change began to occur. Previously, the two slimes could only roll on the slope, but now for some reason, the slimes have become able to roll even on level surfaces.

When I investigated it a bit, the secret was apparently in their nucleus. Transforming is hard, that's a given. But moving the nucleus inside the body isn't. So with that in mind, the slimes apparently started transforming into a ball, and then while still in that form, they would move the nucleus inside their body to shift their center of gravity, which would then allow them to move even on level surfaces!

After that, a few weeks passed again. When they started out, they could only roll slowly. But gradually, they've started to transform a part of their body to kick the ground to accelerate themselves. Because of that, they've become able to move at a similar speed on level ground as they do on downward slopes. It was then that they successfully learned the 'High Speed Movement' skill.

Later, they became even more used to transforming a part of their body to accelerate that they've started to do those small transformations nearly instantly. Turning a part of their body into tentacles is a given, but whenever I see them move, I couldn't help but be reminded of the tires of the bicycles back in my previous world. Seeing that uncanny resemblance, I thought of having them transform into tires.

At first, they couldn't quite get their balance down properly, and they kept falling. But after a bit of training, they've started to slowly change from that ball form, to a fat tire with a small diameter. And then that fat tire gradually turned into a thinner one with a bigger diameter, until eventually they succeeded into a tire that looks just like the bicycles' back in my previous world. Because of this, the two slimes' speed became even faster.

The tire form can go fast on straight lines, but unfortunately it's quite difficult for it to move on sharp curves and tight turns. The ball form can't go as fast as the tire form, but they can do sudden stops from max speed, allowing them to easily change direction, thereby making turns easy. So the slimes are normally in ball form. But when they need the extra speed, they can transform to tire form to go faster.

Also, after I fed those two slimes iron and aluminum in large amounts and made them split, I got a big metal slime and a big iron slime. I was wondering whether they could become a bicycle or not, but apparently it doesn't work. No matter how many times I tried making a part to ride on, their center of gravity just kept braking, and they couldn't move at all using the nucleus trick.

I thought of making something like a chain to pedal with, but unfortunately that didn't work either. As a unicycle it's possible, but it's too slow, so there's no meaning to it. There's no way to tell when a magical beast might come when one is outside the town, so in that regard, the safeness of the unicycle is an out. With that, I postponed the idea.

Oh, and by the way, the big metal slime and the big iron slime both require around 100 slimes to transform, but because I fed them too much, I now have 200 of them.

As I thought those things, I ran. When we got closer to the abandoned mine, I called out to the slimes. Actually, I don't really need to, but I feel like it, so yeah.

"Just a little bit more! This is the last one!" [Ryouma]

At those words, the slimes transformed into tire form, and accelerated. In order not to lose, I also sprinted.

Not long after, we arrived at my house by the entrance of the mine. I opened my 'Dimension Home' and I let loose the slimes, letting them do as they please. Recently, this has been our routine.

"Recently, these guys have started developing an individuality…" [Ryouma]

Lately, whenever I let the slimes out, most of them have been performing self-practice. Most of them would practice with their staffs or their spears, while the metal and iron slimes would mostly practice running around the mine. They tend to run a bit too fast, so there were some accidents in the past. So in order to keep that from happening, I created a race track for them.

The accidents happened because they sped up too much, and since their bodies were hard, they ended up flying. In other words, they didn't have much grip. It's only a given they'd get into an accident though, after all, they ran like the tires of those four-wheel drive cars that go off road in television back in my previous world. Jumping about, bumping into the mountain, and falling off a cliff… if it wasn't for their hardness and physical attack resist skills, they would have already died long ago.

Recently those slimes have also started to moderately soften their skin, allowing them to absorb the shocks better. Also, from the looks of things, they've properly learned to grip the surface, and the instances of jumping about has become very rare. The ground of the race track is also pavement, so there's really been little to no accidents lately.

… But still aren't these guys growing up too fast? It's not a bad thing, but lately I've been getting surprised so many times, it's starting to be a little troublesome. If I try to relax and focus on my research, I'll end up forgetting about the other things, so I have to be careful.

Incidentally there's something I don't understand. Lately, there have been slimes that do nothing but jump in circles nonstop in the same place. Are they bunny-hopping?

That aside, lately I've also been training the magic of the earth slimes and the dark slime. The other slimes can grow as long as I give them their training menu, but I enjoy studying with these slimes that can use elemental magic.

The number of slimes that can use elemental magic has also increased compared to before. Since the slimes managed to evolve into earth slimes and dark slimes, then I figured that they should also be able to turn into slimes of other elements. The result is that I got the wind slime and the light slime… But then a question came up. Why is it that the slimes I catch generally favor earth element and dark element magic power the most?

The slimes I caught number 10. The number of slimes that like the wind element is only 1. I couldn't find any slimes who liked the elements: fire, water, ice, lighting, wood, poison, light, or space magic. And no matter how much I fed the slimes that liked neutral magic power, they wouldn't evolve.

The wind slime evolved within 3 days, but the light slime who didn't like the light element took 3 months to evolve. The remaining eight slimes haven't evolved yet. But as expected, it's best to feed them their preferred magic power as that's the fastest way for them to evolve.

Also, although the wind slime and the light slime have different elements from the dark slimes and earth slime, their statuses are mostly the same.

Wind Slime

Skills

Wind Magic Lv2

Wind Attribute Resistance Lv8

Wind Magic Absorption Lv1

Jump Lv1

Digestion Lv3
Absorption Lv3
Split Lv1

Light Slime

Skills

Light Magic Lv2
Light Attribute Resistance Lv8
Light Magic Absorption Lv1
Jump Lv1
Digestion Lv3
Absorption Lv3
Split Lv1

When this magic absorption is hit with an attack magic, then provided it's the same element as itself, its magic power will be sucked, and the force of the attack will weaken. It seems to be a skill used to nourish one's self. With this skill along with the resistance skill, the damage received from the same element will be mostly negated.

Also, the magic the wind slime can use are 'Breeze' and 'Wind Cutter'. The light slime can use 'Light' which lights up the surrounding area, and the low level light element attack magic, 'Light Ball'. Its abilities seem to have an effect on skeleton and other undead class type monsters, but there're no other effects aside from that. Right now, I'm receiving some lighting from it inside the mine. Overall, it's an undead specialist slime.

"Well then, it's time for training."

As I began the day's training, I thought to myself, "Should I keep the training light in preparation for tomorrow?"

Chapter 15

The next day…

As promised, I went to the guild. There, I saw Miya-san in the room I was brought to. I spent the time idly chatting with her as we waited for the others, at which Wereanna-san's group, Raypin-san, and Asagi-san came one after another. The last one to arrive was Wogan-san. At his arrival, he immediately began to explain the details of the request.

With Wogan's explanation finished, I found out that the request is about securing lumber by hunting treants and carrying them back home. Our goal, at the very minimum is to have at least around 300 treants. But of course, if there's more, then the reward will also increase.

I don't know exactly how much 300 treants will end up being, but I do know that will be an amazing amount. And that's most likely the reason why they called someone like me who can use space magic.

I don't have any problems with it in particular, so I decided to participate. The others did too from the looks of things.

But then, after everyone finished accepting the request, Wereanna-san asked,

"Considering how much treant wood we're gathering… Is there something going on? " [Wereanna]
"Yeah… You know about the population decline of this town, right?" [Wogan]
"Well yeah. After all, one of the mines did get abandoned. It might have only been one mine, but there are still quite a few guys who lost their job." [Wereanna]
"Right, and that's the reason why. The things is, although this story's old news by now, a section of the public office once tried to think of a way to increase the town's profits, but unfortunately the head back then wasn't that passionate about it, so nothing came out of it. But the new head of the public office knew about that event, and this time, he thought of asking for their opinion. The result? They decided to gather people who can make some specialty products, but unfortunately… this town doesn't have anything noteworthy aside from the mines and iron." [Wogan]

How about being a tourist spot for the Rimel Birds?

"Can't the rimel birds be considered a specialty of the town?" [Ryouma]
"Well that idea was proposed too, but the thing is that the season that the rimel birds appear in is also the time when the grell frogs are being hunted, so it's not possible to make them a tourist attraction. We can't stop the hunts either. And besides, something like that is temporary. What the public office wants is something that's available all year round." [Wogan]

Eh–…I suppose town development isn't that simple , huh? But while I don't really get it, isn't it good enough as long as there's something that sells well? So wouldn't it be better not to be so picky, and just make the most out of something already known to be profitable? Like that one or maybe even a festival.

"Isn't it fine even if it's temporary? You could do it as something like 'the flavor of the season' or something…" [Ryouma]
"That's not a bad idea, but this is a mining town, remember? If the mine runs out in the future, then the town will only be able to make a profit during that season. So with that in mind, it's imperative that the town find something that can be profited off of for the whole year." [Wogan]

Ahh, now that he mentions it…

"Well it's not like I don't understand what you're trying to say. In fact, I've actually also thought that it'd be fine to make some profit gradually. But… Well in any case, the discussion this time around went that way, and in the end it was decided for an arena to be made beyond the southern gate of the town to attract tourists. There, those who wish to participate in a bout will be able to, and at the same time, spectators who want to watch will have lodging available for them to stay at. As well as other facilities that might be of service to them. Moreover we also plan to make some profit out of the spectating fees and the betting. It'll take a lot of money to have everything ready, but in exchange, the profits will also be equally big." [Wogan]
"Fighting and gambling, huh? The profits will definitely be big, but in exchange, the public order will probably greatly decline, de gozaru." [Asagi]

Yeah I imagine a number of ruffians and thugs will probably come.

"And that's exactly why it's basically a new t own . All of the facilities, including the lodging for both the guests and the participants, will be built in the new town . As for this town, it will remain a mining town, and nothing will change. It'd be better if you just consider that town and this town to only happen to be managed by the same people, but are completely different from each other.

Moreover, we'll also raise the budge on security, and hire more guards in order to keep the public order safe. The gambling will also be managed by the town. With that kind of thorough management, nothing should go wrong, right?

And to answer Wereanna's question, the design and construction of the arena is being handled by Perle Bekentein." [Wogan]

At those words, everyone besides me was shocked. Is that person famous?

"Umm… What kind of man is that person?" [Ryouma]
"Oh, you don't know, Ryouma? He is the second son of Viscount Bekentein. He was originally supposed to help manage the region under his brother, but then he left his family, and went on to become an architect, de aru." [Raypin]
"As an architect, he's an unparalleled genius, but at the same time, he's famous for being an eccentric." [Miya]

A rather deep person… in more ways than one. Not that I know anything about him.

"Well… that's how it is . After sounding it out, he quickly took the job, apparently thinking it'd be good for his image. But when he did, he gave us a condition. 'I want to use treant wood for the arena, so unless it's treant wood, I refuse to work on it!' he said. And that's how we ended up in the current situation, where we're starting to gradually stock up on those treant wood." [Wogan]

The fastidiousness of an artist? Treant wood being used for architecture is definitely not unheard of, however, it's something generally used for magical contraptions, so it's not usually used as construction material. Considering that this architect is asking for something rather unreasonable, I suppose his skill must be equally considerable. Then again he is known to be an unparalleled genius.

I mused to myself like that for a bit. After which, the meeting ended, and we were dismissed.

The Day of Departure

I've had to do quite a number of preparations for today actually. First, I had to put away all the unneeded belongings from my 'Dimension Home' to the storage room in the mine. Then in order to keep thieves from coming in and stealing from me, I blocked the entrance with earth magic.

After I finished storing my belongings and ensuring that it's safe, I then went on to train to increase the space of my 'Dimension Home' spell that I've learned from Sebasu-san. When I first tried expanding it, I felt the burden on me increase. But leaving it to the abundance of my magic power, I was able to repeat the expansion several times as I tempered myself at the s ame time . In the end, I managed to create a space equivalent to the size of the first floor of my store in Gimuru. Now I'm not exactly privy to the treants' sizes, but I reckon a space this size would be able to fit in a considerable amount of lumber.

Currently, I'm at the south gate of Gimuru, standing here by myself as I wait for the others.

"Are they not coming yet?" [Ryouma]

I'm standing here, looking around me, but not one of them is in sight. At that, I couldn't help but wonder whether they're coming or not. But then as I thought that, I saw, from a considerable distance away, the figures of Raypin-san and Asagi-san, walking towards me.

"Good morning, Raypin-san, Asagi-san!" [Ryouma]
"Good morning, de aru." [Raypin]
"Good morning, Ryouma. How are you, de gozaru?" [Asagi]
"I'm alright." [Ryouma]

After that, we rendezvoused with Miya-san and the rest. Then we got on the carriage with two horses that was prepared by the guild master. Soon as we got our food allowance, we set off. Incidentally, the carriage we were lent, was freight-class, driven by Mizelia-san.

We continued like this for some time until we finally reached a plain with trees growing here and there. It was

a tranquil and heartwarming scenery. And within that was the object of the request we accepted. Oh and by the way, the leader this time around happens to be Asagi-san.

"Then Miya and I along with Wereanna's group will be responsible for defeating the treants. Raypin and Ryouma will be in charge of transporting the defeated treants. At the same time, Raypin will also be in charge of looking for treants and watching our perimeters. Lastly, Ryouma, you won't mind escorting Raypin, right, de gozaru?" [Asagi]

Hearing that, I responded with a nod, indicating that I don't have any problems with it. Although that's how the plan basically is, it's not like I won't be fighting at all. After all, everyone 's a lready aware that the reason I participated in this request is because I wanted to accumulate experience in regards to fighting treants. So it's a given that I'll also be getting some fighting experience.

After that, we talked a bit about what to watch out for regarding the treants and their weaknesses.

The treants attack by whipping their branches from above, and their weak point is the lump that looks like a human's face on their body. Hitting that or around it will greatly damage it, but if you cut it off or break it from below its face, you can kill it. S ince our objective this time is to gather lumber, it's important to minimize the damage on the treants as much as possible.

While there's no need to fuss too much about not damaging it, it's important to keep it in mind.

And should the case where a higher variation, an elder treant, appears, then it's all the more important to take caution. Elder treants move extremely slow, but the branches they move are far thicker than the normal treants, causing it to have just that much more power behind each attack. But more than anything, the elder treants are able to use earth magic. So with that and its ability to stop movement with its branches and vines, it's the natural enemy for vanguards.

After that, distinguishing between treants and other trees can only be done by spotting its face. So if the face is located in a blind spot, then distinguishing becomes very difficult. But fortunately, the treants possess a significant amount of magic power. So with the 'Magic Perception' skill, it's possible to tell them apart by figuring out which tree is emitting magic power.

Lastly, although I'm digressing here, the treants are apparently able to move. They're slower than slimes, but they can uproot themselves and creep about slowly.

After the discussion ended, I went to ask Raypin-san about magical beasts. And from what I hear, magical beasts are flora, fauna, and natural objects of the world that change and propagate according to magic power. Using treants as an example, treants are normal trees that became magical beasts with magic power. Since mutation occurs with magic power, then trees becoming a magical beast isn't that strange.

When I heard that, I couldn't help but ask whether people would be affected or not. And apparently, although it's possible to get intoxicated from too much magic power, causing the body to crumble. The human body will naturally release the excess magic power, preventing something like mutation from occurring.

Since we were on the topic, I took the opportunity and asked about magic power intoxication, and it would appear that people with naturally high magic power are rarely affected. And even for normal people, it only really happens when they use too much magic jewels or eat too much magical beast meat. But since most of the magical power are concentrated in the blood of the magical beasts, as long as one refrains from blood, there shouldn't be any problem eating meat. So overall it's not a particularly serious illness, and catching it from eating meat is so rare, that you can only really blame your luck if that were to be the case.

While talking, we leisurely rode our carriage as we paid careful attention to our surroundings. Raypin told me that because it's obvious when a magical beast is attacking here, it's easy to dodge weak foes. Moreover, there're few magical beasts that would actually dare attack seven adventurers here in Gimuru. And just as he said, not a single attack came at us since our departure from the village.

Along the way, I talked a lot with Raypin-san about magical beasts and slimes. When Mizelia-san asked me about the places I've travelled to so far, as soon as I mentioned miso and soy sauce, Asagi-san started to talk enthusiastically.

"Miso soup, that's so nostalgic, de gozaru… Who would've thought that Renauph would actually manage to get their hands on miso and soy sauce? Thank you for sharing this information with me, de gozaru." [Asagi]
"If you'd like, I could create miso soup for tonight's supper. I have the ingredients for it after all." [Ryouma]
"Is that true!? Then by all means, de gozaru!" [Asagi]

Apparently, Asagi-san was born and raised in a dragonewt island where they used miso and soy sauce.

When nightfall came, I took charge of the day's supper. And inside Raypin-san's 'Dimension Home' I took out miso soup, meat and potato stew, and lastly, rice.

The food was well-received by everyone, but Asagi-san shed tears at the nostalgia of miso soup.

"Hey Asagi, could it be that you haven't been able to visit your hometown for a long time now?" [Wereanna]

"Yes, my home town is in an island far away, so visiting isn't something I can casually do, de gozaru. But more than anything, the teaching in the dojo I studied at, dictated that those who have completed their training to some extent must go and become adventurers. So once one reaches that level, they will be driven out of the island and be forced to go on a journey. And until one is able to become S Rank in the guild or at least 50 years pass, then that student may not return home." [Asagi]

"50 years? Isn't that a bit much?" [Wereanna]

"It's apparently the number of years that the founder of the dojo went around the world. During that time, one must either spend his time training his sword or spend his time learning from the things he sees and hears in his travel. Surviving in the outside world is both a training and a trial. After all, there are powerful magical beasts here and all sorts of people that can't be found in the island, de gozaru." [Asagi]

"But what about protecting your village? Won't it be a problem since the strong people of your village leave and can't come back for 50 years?" [Wereanna]

"There's no need to worry. The only ones who leave the island are those who wish to master the sword. Those who study the sword to protect others, those who work as guards for the village, those who are still training at the dojo, the masters of the dojo, and the ones who are still in the village are all capable of defending the village. Moreover, there's also a number of them, so there shouldn't be any need for anxiety, de gozaru." [Raypin]

We talked like this over supper, and when we finished, we all slept in our respective sleeping bags. Still… I'm honestly quite surprised at how wide this place is.

Even Raypin-san, in the past, couldn't go back home to Gimuru for a long time because of his research. And he spent a long time expanding his 'Dimension Home' in order to fit in all of his belongings, research materials, and specimens. According to him, it was faster to just increase the space of his 'Dimension Home' rather than clean up, so he did that instead.

But nowadays, he's rarely away from Gimuru, so he would often just leave his belongings at home. Moreover, he needed to get as much space as he could for transporting the lumber, so he had to remove as much objects from his 'Dimension Home' as possible. Because of that it feels rather excessively big. Then again, its size is around twice that of my 'Dimension Home'. Right, I should do my best too.

There wasn't anything left to do after we finished whatever preparations were needed, so we just went to sleep.

Sleep early, and tomorrow, we'll set off at sunrise.

Chapter 16

While Ryouma was leisurely riding the carriage, a class was being held at the Imperial Capital's Academy.

"Let's begin the class. First–" [Teacher]

The teacher uninterestedly read the textbook out loud, and began a dull class with no appeal. The students listened to that quietly. Amongst that group of students was a girl. It was Elia.

She straightened her posture, and listened carefully to the instructor. But that was only a front, as deep inside she was actually doing her best to endure the tediousness of the class.

When the morning class ended, she left her seat, and she went to a corner of the school building where magic training is to take place. The magic training area was opened to allow students to use it to train their magic in their own time. And because it's rarely used for anything else aside from magic training, it's not a popular spot.

Elia sat herself on a bench at a corner of the area, and she began to eat her lunch. Afterwards, she trained her magic until the end of lunch break. Then she went to her afternoon class, and when that ended, she went back to her room in her dormitory.

It's already been a month since she's enrolled in this school. And ever since, this has been her daily pattern.

"Fuu…" [Elia]

Elia let out a sigh as she stopped releasing her magic.

"It's only been a month, and yet I'm already at the end of my patience… Who would've thought that the classes here would be this boring?" [Elia]

From the first year until the third year, students of this school must study the foundation and culture of various things. From the fourth year until the sixth, one must study specialized knowledge and skills. After graduating, depending on what path one took in school, he or she will enter into further studies or apprenticeship.

Elia who has just enrolled is currently studying the basics of the basics. The basic history of the country, geometry, arithmetic, magic, and with stamina building in mind, swordsmanship. But those are all things that all nobles, not just Elia, have already studied.

Such classes were simply too easy for Elia. Even if her grades are good as a result, there's no sense of achievement.

Moreover, there wasn't even a single person from her class of 40 that attempted to talk to her. Of course, this wasn't because they were bullying her or ignoring her. Rather it's because of her title as the daughter of the duke coupled with her frightening magic power that they were unable to talk to her. As much as possible they didn't want to get involved with her.

Because Elia knew that she was being avoided, she didn't bother waiting for anyone to come and talk to her. Even excluding the people she naturally can't get along with, forcefully trying to mingle with others will only cause them to put up a fake act, completely unable to refuse because of fear. And of course, Elia hated that sort of relationship.

As a result, despite having been enrolled for over a month already, Elia's friend number was zero. Like this, Elialia spent her days in the school enduring the boredom and the loneliness.

"Even though I already knew about it before enrolling… haa…" [Elia]

"What's wrong, miss?" [Somebody]
"Eh!?" [Elia]

Without knowing when someone had neared her, Elia turned around to that voice.

"Oh… You're Earl Willdan's…" [Elia]

When Elia turned around, shock visibly showed on the face of the person who had called her. And she quickly introduced herself as she bowed her head.

"Please pardon my rudeness. My name is Michelle, the first daughter of Earl Willdan. I was unable to distinguish the lady as the daughter of Duke Jamil from behind, please excuse my lack of manners." [Michelle]

She is Michelle Willdan. Although the daughter of an earl, she is an unladylike female student. Her short hair that's too short to reach her shoulders has been cut without much thought. Her clothes are a mix of a man's pants and a woman's shirt. Her belongings look to place greater emphasis on practicality rather than on looks as she carried with her a big, plain, black bag. And her androgynous face made her appear to be a boy merely disguising as a girl.

"Rude? The differences in social classses don't apply to this place, you know? Besides I'm not particular about it either myself." [Elia]

This school makes all of its students wear uniforms regardless of whether one is a noble or a commoner under the pretense of having no distinction between social classes. However, they don't regulate accessories. Because of that the noble students purposely wear gaudy hair pins made out of gold or jeweled rings in order to show off their status.

Elia, however, isn't wearing any of those gaudy accessories. And although she might be wearing the proper school attire, because of the lack of accessories, Michelle mistook her for a commoner female student.

"Thank you very much." [Michelle]

As Michelle said that, she laughed. Unlike the others, Elia couldn't feel any sense of wanting to avoid her from Michelle. Because of that Elia decided to try talking to her.

"Would it be fine to call you Michelle-san?" [Elia]
"Of course, milady."
"Please call me Elia. I've said it before just now too. Social status has no relevance in this place." [Elia]

Hearing that, Michelle smiled and said,

"… Fufu, then I'll be calling you Elia. Also, I'd like to keep our speech less formal if you don't mind, it's exhausting after all." [Michelle]
"Very well then. I prefer it that way myself actually." [Elia]
"I see. By the way, I asked the same thing a while ago, but… is anything the matter?" [Michelle]
"No, there aren't any problems in particular. It's just that this school's classes are rather…" [Elia]
"Ahh… I know exactly what you mean. I'm also only pretending to be taking the classes, and during break times, I avoid talking to people in order not to be caught in some weird clique." [Michelle]
"Oh, is that how it is? I was under the impression that you were popular?" [Elia]

Michelle laughed.

"Haha, well certainly at first. The girls mistook me for a guy and got quite attached – oh by the way I'm wearing this cause it's comfortable – anyway as soon as they found out that I'm a girl, they distanced themselves from me. Well it's not that much of a problem though, after all I'm not really that sociable. Besides it was troublesome, so I was actually gradually avoiding it." [Michelle]
"I see. Then why are you here today?" [Elia]
"Today's different. Because today I specifically came here to experiment with this." [Michelle]

As she said that, she took a piece of paper from her bag. On that paper was a magic formation drawn by pencil. Seeing that, Elia said,

"Magic formation… Michelle-san are you an alchemist?" [Elia]

At those words, Michelle's eyes opened wide for a moment, but immediately after her face turned into a smile bigger than any of the smiles she's showed so far.

"Unfortunately, I'm not an alchemist. I'm only studying magic formations." [Michelle]
"Magic formations, was it?" [Elia]

Magic formation is an extremely minor branch of study in this world. It stems from the phenomenon where

magic power is able to pass through to alchemy's magic formation, causing it to shine bright. The study of magic formation is all about answering the question why the formation is able to do that.

As she said that, Elia looked deeply at the piece of paper with a magic formation drawn on it with pencil.

"So there was that kind of study." [Elia]
"It's a study that branches from alchemy, but because of the lack of results, it's gradually declined. I came here to this school because I heard that there was a teacher who teaches it here… But unfortunately, the teacher has apparently retired last year, so now I have no choice but to study it by myself. Well at least I have plenty of time." [Michelle]
"So that's how it is." [Elia]
"That's right. By the way, Elia." [Michelle]
"What is it?" [Elia]
"You seem to be quite familiar with how alchemy uses magic formation, huh? There're plenty of rumors going around regarding alchemy, saying a magic formation isn't needed, instead some sort of medicine or sacrifice is a requirement. Moreover, you don't seem to have any ill will towards alchemy either." [Michelle]

Hearing that, Elia couldn't help but think to herself, "Oops." At that moment, Michelle, sensing something was amiss, quickly revised her words in a panic.

"For the record, I'm not prejudiced against alchemy or anything. In fact, if I had to say what I thought of it, then I'd lean towards being interested in it." [Michelle]
"Interest?" [Elia]
"It's because the study of magic formations originated from alchemy, so I have some interest in its roots as well. It's not really that strange, right? Although I do hate those alchemists who use alchemy as a way to commit fraud, I don't believe that all alchemists are like that. There are also alchemists in this world who like scholars of the field of magic formation continue in their research without bearing fruit. Or at the very least, I believe this to be the case." [Michelle]

Hearing that, Elia was a little relieved.

"I see." [Elia]
"If possible, I'd like you to teach me a bit about alchemy, but…" [Michelle]

But even if she says that, Elia herself doesn't know any alchemy. Well she knows a little from Ryouma, but it's not at a level where she could teach it to other people. And more than anything, even if she does claim to have no prejudice, Elia still can't help but feel hesitant to talk about Ryouma being an alchemist to other people. And Elia definitely won't tell anyone about the things he makes.

"Unfortunately, I've only had the opportunity to meet with an alchemist, and I'm not actually studying it." [Elia]

Elia refused as if it was a given. In response, Michelle didn't say anything more, and she meekly backed down. Then she began to prepare for her experiment.

Michelle then laid the paper on the floor, and she opened it. After which she then took out some pink colored grains from her bag, and mixed it with ink.

"Michelle-san, what is that?" [Elia]
"This ink is just an ink. As for the grains, they're fire and neutral magic jewels that were pulverized and mixed together. Our magic formation differs from the magic formation of alchemists in that magic power can't pass through to the formation with the formation alone. Without mixing ink and powdered jewels, it's not possible to pass magic power to it. And in the end, what we accomplish isn't the same magic formation the alchemist's use but our own version of the magic formation." [Michelle]
"Then in that case, is there anything different?" [Elia]

"From what I currently know, the effect of the magic formation changes based on the attributes of the magic jewel powder that the ink was mixed into. While the ratio of the distribution of the magic jewel only adjusts its power.

For example, if the ink is mixed with a fire attribute magic jewel, and from that a magic formation is drawn, then any magic power that passes through it will be fire attribute. As for the strength of the fire, the distribution of the ink will deal with that, and the formation will be responsible for managing the flames.

The formation isn't just some scribbles either. First, one must draw a circle. Then inside that, a pattern should be drawn, but I don't understand that part much." [Michelle]
"What do you mean you don't understand much?" [Elia]

"The pattern drawn within the circle also affects the effect and efficiency of the formation. But unfortunately, I don't know what the most efficient pattern is. So I've been trying out one formation after another in order to find out what's efficient. But because of that, I've come to need a large number of magic jewels. And as a result, I'm always in need of money. Otherwise, I can't continue with my research." [Michelle]

"So that's how it is… By the way, why are you doing this research again?" [Elia]
"The reason I'm researching? Well that's because it's interesting. It's an unpopular topic without much data or progress on it. Which is really just another way of saying that there's still plenty left to discover, right? So I want to unveil its secrets and see if I can make use of it.

And besides, even if I look like this, I am still the daughter of an earl. And the Willdan family has been a family of researchers for generations. If someone amongst us wants to research, then the family will without question wish them good luck and provide them the funds." [Michelle]

When Michelle said that, Elia saw a slight resemblance to Ryouma in Michelle. As Michelle drew the magic formation with her ink, she said,

"I don't know what effect will come out of this, so back off a little." [Michelle]

Just as she was told, Elia took her distance. After confirming that Elia had distanced herself from the formation, Michelle allowed her magic power to flow into the formation. And the formation glowed bright red. When Michelle saw that reaction, she quickly distanced herself from it. And after five seconds, a small ball of fire flew out of the formation as the explosive sound like that of firecrackers resounded.

"Kyaa!?" [Elia]
"Kyaa!?" [Somebody]
"Oh, oh… to think this kind of reaction… hmm?" [Michelle]

Although Michelle was preoccupied with the reaction of the magic formation, she still noticed that there weren't just one, but two surprised voices that cried out behind her. At that, she turned, and just like her, Elia did so as well. There, Miyabi, a female fox girl student, was apparently just about to enter the training area. Seeing that, Michelle called out to her.

"Looks like I scared you. My apologies." [Michelle]
"This is the training area, so it's only a given that loud sounds would boom out around here. If anything, the one in the way is me, for that please excuse me." [Miyabi]
"Oh, no, no. Please don't mind it. Rather than that, you are Miyabi-san, correct?" [Michelle]
"She's in the same class, right?" [Elia]
"It's an honor to be remembered not only in face but in name as well by the daughters of the Willdan Household and the Jamil Household." [Miyabi]

Replied Miyabi in a fashion meant for interacting with nobles.

"There's no need to talk so politely. Miyabi-san, are you going to practice now?" [Elia]
"No, actually, milady. There is something that I would like to pass on to you." [Miyabi]
"To me?" [Elia]
"Yes. I've been entrusted with a message from someone the lady knows. Which is why I've come here today." [Miyabi]

If Miyabi just outright declared that it was a man who had entrusted her that, and someone managed to hear it, then it might catch fire and become a topic for gossips. So in order to prevent that, Miyabi's been looking for an opportunity to talk to her privately. And after a month, she saw Elia enter the training area alone as usual.

But unfortunately, this time, Michelle was around, causing her to panic. But of course, she was calm enough to be able to answer when asked.

In order to plot this meeting, Miyabi's been getting information from other people regarding Elia's and the personality of the other nobles. From that she found out that Elia and Michelle don't place much emphasis on the differences between social statuses. A normal response won't cause any problems. Knowing that lessened the mental burden on her. But other than that, she also had the message from Ryouma as an excuse for calling out to her.

"A message for me?" [Elia]
"Yes. Would the lady happen to know the name, Ryouma?" [Miyabi]
"From Ryouma-san!?" [Elia]

Ryouma thought of creating an impetus for Elia to make friends, but he wasn't sure whether they would actually become friends or not. After all, whether they get along or not is something that the two of them will have to decide for themselves. That's why he made his move in order to get Elia and Miyabi to meet, but he didn't say anything about Miyabi to Elia.

What Ryouma didn't tell Elia was that they both shared a common acquaintance. He did this thinking that there's no need to since there are plenty of other topics to talk about. That and another reason was that Ryouma also held some mischievous thoughts, wanting to surprise Elia a bit.

"It would appear that the lady does in fact know him." [Miyabi]
"Yes, but why would Miyabi-san know Ryouma-san?" [Elia]
"I came to know him through my dad. And he told me to pass on a message to a girl named Elialia in the academy." [Miyabi]
"So that's how it is…" [Elia]

At that, Michelle spoke.

"That Ryouma is Elia's acquaintance?" [Michelle]
"Yes, he's a bit strange, but he's my friend." [Elia]
"Well he's certainly a bit strange…" [Miyabi]
"Oh..." [Michelle]

Hearing Elia's words, Miyabi absent-mindedly said that. And hearing about how weird Ryouma is, Michelle became curious.

"And, what did Ryouma want you to pass to me?" [Elia]
"'Do your best,' is all he said. It seems he's worried about you." [Miyabi]

Those words were enough for Elia to guess Ryouma's intentions. After all, she knew very well that there's no need to ask someone to say only a few words. Moreover, writing it by letter is more than enough.

So the only reason then must be that Ryouma remembered what Elia had told him before parting at the town of Gimuru about how she had no friends. And so he tried to create an opportunity for Elia to make friends.

"Thank you very much. I've properly received his message. And since we've met like this anyway, it must be some sort of fate. If you don't mind, would you like to become friends with me?" [Elia]
"Is that alright? Saying something like that to me is…" [Miyabi]
"There are no differences between social statuses here. Besides, it's lonely having no friends in school." [Elia]

At those words, Miyabi smiled and she accepted. Michelle also joined in.

"Then in that case sign me up as well. I don't have many friends either." [Michelle]
"But of course." [Elia]
"I got your back!" [Miyabi]

Like this, the three met, and as they shook each other's hands, lunch break ended. They went back to class, and they passed through the boring afternoon classes.

TL Note:
If you're wondering why Miyabi doesn't have her speech pattern, it's because she tries to turn it off when she can. Remember her first meeting with Ryouma? It's something like that. Although actually her pattern did come out in her last sentence, but I'm not really sure how to show something that slight in English.

Willdan girl uses boku (male pronoun).

Chapter 17

After school the three girls chatted at a corner of the school's courtyard. It was a good opportunity, so they decided to chat and get to know each other some more. But just as they were about to finish, Michelle suddenly said,

"Hey, how about we form our own group?" [Michelle]

In this school, there are assignments or practical work invovling magic or swordsmanship that needs to be done in groups. However these groups aren't decided by the instructors or by the school, rather they're decided by the students themselves.

If the school tried to forcibly dictate the groups, then the nobles would get mad. Part of the reason is because of compatibilitiy between the members, but there're also those who simply don't want to be in the same group as commoners.

However, in cases where there are students leftover without any groups, then they need to be taken in by other groups that don't have enough members. Neither the commoners nor the nobles have any say in this. But of course, it's not hard to imagine how uncomfortable of a situation that would be.

Elia and Michelle may not have any problems regarding groups, but of course it's still best to make a group with people that you get along with ahead of time. And that's why Michelle suggested to make a group, while Elia and Miyabi immediately agreed.

"But if we're making a group, then we'll have to gather two or three more members. We need five or six to make a group after all." [Elia]
"Yeah, otherwise we'll end up with students we don't know." [Michelle]
"Without considering social standing or anythin', can ya two think of anyone?" [Miyabi]
"I can think of one." [Michelle]
"Who?" [Elia]
"Liera Clifford, the eldest daughter of the Baron Clifford." [Michelle]
"Baron Clifford... From what I know, he used ta be a knight, but after pilin' up achievement after achievement, he became a baron. Nowadays, they're known for raisin' some oustandin' knights." [Miyabi]
"Exactly. Her pride's a bit high, and she won't shut up when it comes to rules, but she doesn't look down on commoners, and she honestly acknowledges anyone with skill. She treats commoners as if they're equal too." [Michelle]
"She's certainly qualified. Is she someone you know?" [Elia]
"There was a point in time where we saw each other a lot. But because of my research and because of her training, we've rarely had the chance to lately." [Michelle]

Like this, the three of them agreed to invite Liera Clifford. And immediately, they went to find her.

The place they went to was the training area for swordsmen. As soon as they got there, Michelle pointed at a corner and said,

"She's over there, let's go." [Michelle]
With Michelle leading, the three went over to a corner of the training area where a female student zealously praticed her sword as she gave off a frigid aura. With the girl's height tall for her age and a face that could easily pass as that of a beauty's, she stood out. Then from the group of male students that was watching her from a distance came Michelle's voice.
"Liera, could you come with me for a bit?" [Michelle]
"Michelle? What's the matter? And that person is..." [Liera]
"Calm down first, then we'll talk." [Michelle]

Michelle took Liera with her and left the training area. Following after her were Elia and Miyabi. They then sat at a resting area with few people. On the way, Michelle had already explained to Liera about their plan.

"I see, so you came to invite me... Alright, then in that case, I'd be grateful if you added me into your group." [Liera]
"Really?" [Elia]
"That's great!" [Michelle]

Elia and Michelle were both delighted, but Miyabi didn't look to be fazed at all as she asked Liera,

"Ya sure you're okay with this? From what I've heard, ya have the highest grades in swordsmanship, and many people have already tried ta get ya ta join them." [Miyabi]
"It's true that I've received plenty of invitations, but they're all from people I can't get along with. People who only see me as a tool to raise their grades, or people who don't even have the slightest decorum to hide their perverted gazes... And more than that, I can't agree with people who despise commoners. I don't want to be grouped up with people who mistake their haughtiness for pride." [Liera]

Although still a student, Liera's soul was already that of a fine knight.

It was in this way that Liera became their friend. And the four began to discuss who to ask next.

"I can't think of anyone. To begin with, I don't have a lot of connections, so..." [Liera]
"Liera's been obsessing over her sword ever since after all." [Michelle]
"Well aren't you one to talk? Even though you're exactly the same when it comes to your research." [Liera]
"True, then in that case, I guess we'll have to rely on Miyabi. I mean you're a merchant, right Miyabi? I reckon you must have a lot of connections." [Michelle]
"Even if ya tell me that, I don't have that many either... It's only been a month since enrolling, ya see? So... and besides the number of students that haven't been included in a group has also decreased a lot, ya know? And more than anything, don't ya all think it'd be best if we got another girl as our member? After all, we're all girls here." [Miyabi]
"If it's possible, then a girl would be best. Although as long as he won't look at us with a discomforting gaze, then even a guy would be fine." [Liera]
"It's because your style is so good." [Elia]
"I know right? We were just around the same level in the past too... I wonder why the gap is so big now... Even the parts that should be tightened are tightened." [Michelle]
"Where are you looking!?" [Liera]
"Hmm... everywhere?" [Michelle]
"Don't look!" [Liera]
"Now, now, please calm down. Anyway, we can't seem ta think of anyone, huh?" [Miyabi]
"It's not like there're none though." [Elia]
"Well yeah, but the group's balance will be affected. Right now, I can think of four people, but amongst those, three want ta be magicians. And even now, the only one who can fight in close combat amongst us is Liera. If we took two of the people I have in mind, then we'll end up with six magicians and one swordsman." [Miyabi]
"True.... the balance would definitely be quite bad in that case." [Elia]
"It's not like I'm fussing over the grades or anything, but there's also some danger in our assignments and training." [Miyabi]
"It'd be tough for me to defend five. Once we're surrounded, it's over. The teacher will also be watching and supporting over us during training, but it's not good to rely on that. If we could another swordsman more it would be great, but..." [Liera]
"Unfortunately the last person I have in mind won't be a swordsman either. The people I have in mind can fight to some extent though. I mean one of them can do some covert ops and put up some traps. A person well inclined for scouting in other words. And...- Well speak of the devil, looks like she's actually here." [Miyabi]
"*Sniff... I was rejected again..." [Girl]

As Miyabi said that, Elia and the others looked at where Miyabi was looking. Some distance from where they were was a seemingly vigorous girl with dog ears and short hair sitting there with her head down.

"Her?" [Michelle]
"Her name is Kanan. A commoner. She's skilled with her hands and specialsizes in making small accessories and other crafts. Ta keep the story short, she's an artisan. Apparently she wants ta take her classes ta that direction as soon as she finishes her basic classes." [Miyabi]
"I see... so now what?" [Michelle]
"As long as her personality's good, I have no complaints. Even if she can't fight, I'll do my best to protect her." [Liera]
"Same here." [Elia]
"Aight, I'll go ahead and call her over then." [Miyabi]

As Miyabi said that, she called out to the girl whose head was drooped. When the girl heard Miyabi's voice, she raised her head and saw Miyabi.

"Kanan-han, are you free right now?" [Miyabi]
"Eh!? Ah, you're Miyabi-san, right? Do you need something from me?" [Kanan]
"I'm looking for members ta invite ta our group. And seeing ya here, I thought I'd invite ya too." [Miyabi]
"Really!?" [Kanan]

Soon as she heard Miyabi's words, Kanan enthusiastically agreed. Kanan's overly vigorous agreement as she took Miyabi's hands, shocked Miyabi.

"In any case, the other members are also here, so let's go meet with them." [Miyabi]
"Yes, please!" [Kanan]

Miyabi brought Kanan to where Elia and the others were, and with her sparkling eyes and her loud voice, Kanan greeted the others full of zeal.

"My name is Kanan Shuza! It's a pleasure to meet you all!" [Kanan]

Having noticed her last name, Michelle was the first to reply.

"Nice to meet you too. By the way, by Shuza do you mean..." [Michelle]

As soon as Michelle began to talk about her last name, Kanan's face grew cloudy, so Michelle bit her tongue and kept herself from asking any further. But because Kanan already knew what Michelle wanted to ask, she answered.

"Yes. I come from a reputable family of magic artisans. I am a daughter of the Shuza family. However, I am a dunce when it comes to magic craftsmanship, so please don't expect anything from me in that regard." [Kanan]
"A dunce?" [Michelle]
"Actually, I am a specialist enchanter of the enchantment branch of magic." [Kanan]
"I see..." [Michelle]
"Sorry, but can you explain?" [Liera]

Kanan, Michelle, and Miyabi seemed to understand the situation, but Liera and Elia didn't, so Kanan began to explain about enchantment magic.

When one refers to enchantment magic, what they're actually referring to is the magic responsible for creating magic tools, weapons, and or armors. However, the only ones who can use that magic are the descendants of enchanters. Story says that a long itme ago, the first ones to use enchantment magic were a number of people who were born with a special constitution. And today, the only ones who can use that magic are those who carry the originals' blood in their veins.
As their descendants have increased, there are people being born today who are able to use enchantment magic. Within those people, however, is sometimes born a special enchanter who possesses the same kind of constitution as those of the first ones. These people are unable to use any magic other than enchantment.
"In enchantment magic, it's essential to be able to use both enchant magic and the magic you want to enchant into the object. But because I'm only able to use one type of magic, I haven't been able to create a single magic tool for anyone." [Kanan]
"So that's why... I asked you something sensitive, I'm sorry." [Liera]
"Not at all! You're recruiting me after all! So it's only a given for me to answer whatever questions you have!" [Kanan]

As soon as Kanan said that out loud, the group made up their mind. Of course, it's a given that entering a group that will be undergoing perilous trials will require an interview of some sort regarding what one can and can't do. However, whether one can say his or her weaknesses out loud is another question. It might be important information, but that fact alone doesn't make it easy to say. There are those would try to say it, but make it vague. While there're those with worse personalities who wouldn't hesitate to lie through their teeth.

The fact that Kanan was able to say something like that out loud goes to show that she's a trustworthy person. And the four girls understood that very well.

"I have no complaints with her." [Liera]
"I'm also in agreement." [Michelle]
"I'd also like to have her as a part of our group." [Elia]
"Then it's decided." [Miyabi]

When those words entered Kanan's ears, her jaws dropped to the floor. And what came out of her mouth were these words,

"Eh... you- would take me? Me? Even though I can't use magic? Even though I'm mostly a beginner at swordsmanship?" [Kanan]
"You don't have to worry over something like that." [Elia]
"Ability comes second." [Michelle]
"If you can't fight, then I'll protect you." [Liera]

"So with that, we'll be welcoming you, Kanan-han. But of course, if you don't want to, then we won't force ya." [Miyabi]
"Of course not!! Thank you very much!! I've been refused so many times, I didn't know what to do anymroe!! I'll be in your care!![Kanan]

Today, Kanan succeeded at avoiding a disastrous school life. Although after this she later found out that all of the three girls aside from Miyabi were all nobles. Moreover, two of them were daughters of a duke and an earl. This fact greatly shocked her, but that's not really important.

What's important is that the five of them had managed to make friends that they're able to talk to easily. They might quarrel from time to time, but there's no doubt that their school life has become better than ever.

Chapter 18

We spent five days in the carriage.

During that time, I took care of the cooking duties and learned how to handle horses from Mizelia-san and Miya-san.

I was tasked with the cooking because my cooking was the best in the group.

In exchange, the other jobs were mostly taken care of by the others. For example, although we were attacked a lot by the goblins, I didn't have to go out and fight as Raypin-san would swiftly take care of them each and every time.

Consequently, I ended up with plenty of time in my hands. I've heard that horseback riding is quite useful, so I asked Miya-san and Mizelia-san if they could teach me, and they happily complied.

The thing though is that I didn't know how to ride horses back in my previous life either, so even until now, I'm still learning how to ride them.

"You've already got the basics down. All that's left is for you to practice and get used to it." [Mizelia]
"Thank you. Mizelia-san." [Ryouma]

Mizelia-san may have given me her approval, but I haven't really gotten the basics down just yet. If I don't practice, I'll probably forget it immediately, so… should I buy a carriage? But there's not really a lot of opportunities to use it, so it's kind of a waste. It's not just buying a carriage either too as I'll need to buy a horse. Eh, I'll just think about it later.

4 hours passed and we finally closed in to the village that's closest to the forest. 20 more minutes passed, and the village gates entered our sight.

From hereon it's going to get crowded with people so I switched with Mizelia-san, and then gazed at the village. This village is a lot quieter compared to Gimuru, but it's bustling too in its own way.

Along the way I noticed that the houses here were are all made out of wood. I guess their forests must be thriving.

Caught up in my thoughts, before I knew it, we were already at the lodging's entrance. There were 3 men and 4 women in our group, so we took 2 rooms, and then we made way for the adventurer's guild. There, we gathered information about the places that the treants frequented. Afterwards, we prepared for tomorrow.

Tomorrow

"Is everyone ready, de gozaru?" [Asagi]

At Asagi-san's question we all nodded, and then we entered the forest.

Leading in front was Miya-san and Mizelia-san, followed by Syria-san and Wereanna-san, and then by Raypin-san, and finally Asagi-san.

The forest is dimly lit and dense. If it were only that then it wouldn't be different form the Forest of Gana, but for some reason, the atmosphere in the forest was suffocating.

"Oh? We've already found one. Miya, look. 20 meters ahead of us, there's a tree that's somewhat thicker than the others, de aru." [Raypin]
"Is that it, nyaa?" [Miya]
"That's right." [Raypin]

At Raypin-san's words, Miya-san pointed towards the tree. The tree was a needle-leaved tree with a diameter of 30cm to 40cm. Its height was around 4 meters high. It looked almost exactly the same as the trees around it. It was slightly bigger than the others, but that's not really something that you'd notice at a glance.

After Raypin-san confirmed that the tree was a treant, and after we were sure that there were no other treants

around it, Miya-san and Mizelia-san headed towards it with a one-handed axe in hand.

When Miya-san and Mizelia-san neared the tree, its branches suddenly curved. And like a whip it lashed with its branches from above towards the two. The two dodged it, but the treant's branches could curve surprisingly well as it attempted to wrap around Mizelia-san.

Mizelia-san struck back with her axe, and at the same time – although I couldn't really see her well as she appeared as nothing more than a shadow from where I was – she bashed the treant with her axe.

Immediately after, the branches began to droop, then the tree lurched. With the fight over, they waved at us, calling us over. When we got to where they were, Miya-san lodged her axe into the treant's face.

"If you dodge the branches and hit it like this, you can beat it in one hit, nyaa." [Miya]
"The fight is fairly easy when it's 1 on 1, so if ever we come across another lone treant, Ryouma, you should try fighting it." [Mizelia]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

While Miya-san and Mizelia-san were giving me advice, I noticed Raypin-san making a difficult face.

"Raypin-san, is something the matter?" [Ryouma]
"We found one too fast. Treants generally prefer living in the inner part of the forest, so it's quite rare for one to be seen this close to the village, de aru." [Raypin]

Come to think of it, the guild hadn't mentioned anything about treants appearing by the entrance either.

"If it's like this, then there might be quite a number of them deep in the forest, de aru." [Raypin]
"There's also the possibility that a treant just got lost, but we still shouldn't be careless, de gozaru." [Asagi]

Those words reminded us to be cautious, so we immediately focused our senses. Then we cut the branches of the treant, and stored it into Raypin-san's 'Dimension Home'. After which, we began to walk again.

After walking for a while, we found another treant.

"Ryouma, how about trying this one, de aru?" [Raypin]
"Sure." [Ryouma]

I stepped forward and unsheathed my weapon. The weapon I have is shaped like a blade, but it's actually a big iron slime. Incidentally, its sheath is a big metal slime.

Thanks to the 'hardening' skill, the blade is more than strong enough to be used as a weapon. Moreover, it's also sharp enough too. On top of that, in the unlikely instance where my sword gets bent, the slime can reform itself immediately, fixing my weapon in an instant.

Using 'Magic Detection', I ascertain my target. Circulating my ki, I clad both my sword and body it in it as I wielded my sword, raising it right in front of me. The treant this time around is thinner compared to the last. As soon as I entered its range, one of its branches came whipping at me from above.

I dodged the whipping branch, and at the same time, I moved to the right and confirmed the location of the lump that is its weak point. Without any hesitation, I took my sword and slashed at it, smoothly cutting the lump off.

A voice that sounded like a throe resounded as the lump fell down to the ground where its roots were. Then just as the treant before it, its branches drooped, and it ceased to move. The battle had ended with a lone stroke from my blade. With the battle over, the others walked over to help collect the treant, and then we made our way through the forest again to look for another.

What's scary about treants is that they are able to blend themselves in with the surrounding trees, making their surprise attacks fairly formidable. However, that also goes to mean that if you could spot them before entering their attacking range, the treants lose their fangs. In any case, one on one doesn't seem to be a problem. How the fights will go when there's a forest of them however… we'll have to see.

We continued our treant hunting in the forest until the afternoon, subjugating them, then storing the logs in the 'Dimension Home'. Then around the time I was finally getting used to fighting them, we spotted a forest of treants. With everyone's help, we managed to annihilate all of those too.

But their numbers were still a staggering one-hundred and forty-seven. Even though the place they were at was supposedly a place often frequented by people as a resting place, the only thing we could see was an

ever extending forest. This wasn't in the information provided by the guild.

"We still have time, so there's no need to rush the acquisition of treant lumber. More than that, I believe it'd be best to inform the guild about the treants' number, de gozaru." [Asagi]

True… There are far too many treants here in the forest compared to what the guild's information said. We have already gathered a total of 200 treant lumbers. While the minimum we had planned to gather was only 300. With more than half of that quota already met, I suppose it really might be for the best that we go back to the village first.

And so we left the forest and quickly went to the guild where we reported our findings. There, we spoke to the female receptionist at the reception desk. After we explained the situation, the receptionist said this with a docile face.

"Thank you very much. Actually, just a moment ago, a group of people who had seen the strange state of the forest just as your group has, dropped by. And so we were actually in the process of sending someone out to investigate." [Female Receptionist]
"I see… Would you happen to have any ideas what could possibly be causing this outbreak of treants?" [Raypin]
"There's a possibility that there's an Elder Treant. To begin with there are plenty of treants deep in the forest near this town, and sightings of it has also been reported once some years ago. I don't know why, but it's said that when an elder treant is born, a great number of treants will spring forth around it." [Female Receptionist]
"So it's as expected, de aru… Will you mind if we enter the forest? What are the rules regarding that?" [Raypin]
"Please do as you like. As long as you're A Rank or B Rank, then there won't be any problem." [Female Receptionist]

Actually, I'm an E Rank, but I think I'll just keep quiet. Besides she doesn't look like she's planning on stopping just me from going into the forest too anyway. And since we're going into the forest either way, the female receptionist made us take a request to subjugate the treants.

Adventurers can actually take on multiple requests at the same time. Especially when those requests happen to be close to each other, and when the adventurers have some leeway to work with. Since it's an easy way to make more income, it's not really uncommon to do it.

This time around for example, by taking both the request to subjugate the treants near this town, and while taking on the request to gather treant lumber, we'll be able to kill two birds with one stone, and receive the reward for both requests. It won't take us much extra effort too, since one request is to gather lumber, which of course requires subjugating treants anyway, so it's all pluses and no minuses.

After gathering the necessary information and accepting the treant subjugation request, we had nothing to do until tomorrow. So in order not to put that time to waste, I entered the hyperspace room, and began training with my slimes. Today the focus of the training are the poison slimes.

While doing our usual practice, it suddenly occurred to me what would happen if I handed Melzen's Spear to a poison slime. I think it might be a bit heavy, but I'm sure it'll manage somehow, and successfully use it as a spear. But then… Melzen's Spear is also a magic weapon, will it be able to use its magic properties too?

Slimes do release magic power when they evolve. Moreover, I've also confirmed that they absorb that magic power as they complete their evolution. Is that magic power something that comes out only when they evolve? Or are they able to use that magic power any time?

My mind on fire, I called out one of the poison slimes, and made it release magic power. Surprisingly, it actually easily succeeded at releasing it! If it's like this, then this might just work!

Filled with anticipation, I took out Melzen's spear, and handed it over to the poison slime before me. As I ordered it to load the spear with magic power, a vigorous fire erupted from the tip of the spear.

It worked!

"Can you swing the spear while releasing magic power?" [Ryouma]

The poison slime began to swing the fire breathing spear. The spear's a bit heavy, so its movements are a bit duller than normal… but it seems it can at least use it. But then its movements began to grow duller and duller.

"Slimes are supposedly tireless. They shouldn't know the meaning of the word, fatigue, and yet… Could it be magic exhaustion?" [Ryouma]

As I was about to order the slime to stop, the poison slime suddenly dropped the spear, and it became smaller.

"Why!?" [Ryouma]

Panicked, I quickly rushed over to it, but fortunately, nothing else seems to be wrong. Only, it's a bit weak. Its body is around half that of a normal poison slime, and its movements have become slow. For the meantime, let's observe it while feeding it some poison attribute magic power.

"It doesn't seem like it's because of 'Compression' that it's body has shrunk. Besides, a mere poison slime shouldn't have the 'Compression' skill." [Ryouma]

I identified it with 'Monster Identify', and just as expected, it didn't have the 'Compression' skill. Then why? Why is it smaller? Is it because I made it use magic? I can't think of any other explanation other than that, But if that's the case, then why would magic power cause its body to shrink?

"Body… Magic power… Could it be, it's consuming it?" [Ryouma]

I don't have any positive proof, but if a slime's body were to be made out of magic power, then it would make sense why it'd grow weaker and smaller from using magic power. I can't think of any other reason; this has to be it.

But then… magic power is not something that you could normally see with the human eye, and neither is it something that you could touch… but at the same time, it's true that slimes' bodies disappear when they die. So if the body of slimes were to be made out of magic power, it would make perfect sense why their bodies just vanish on death, but… if that's the case, then…

"… I should probably leave this at this for now. In any case, I've managed to come up with the hypothesis that slimes' bodies are made out of magic power. I should talk to Raypin-san about this later, and ask for his opinion. Yeah, let's do that." [Ryouma]

After that I left the 'Dimension Home', and while having supper, I asked Raypin-san about the slimes, but apparently he didn't know either. To begin with, giving a high class magic weapon to a slime is unheard of, and when he heard that slimes could release magic power, he was shocked.

In the end, the conclusion we both came to is that there's a possibility to my hypothesis. Magical beasts do have more magical power in them compared to normal animals, and even those who can't use magic are not an exception. So it's not really that strange that slimes possess magic power.

But for it to shrink after using magic power, even though the earth slimes and the heal slimes don't is something I just don't understand. It seems I need to research more…

The next day.

We entered the forest today too, and hunted treants to gather lumber. We already knew that there'd be a lot of treants, but I still can't wrap my head around just how many there are… We've been hunting since morning until noon, and so far with the previous day's spoils together, we've already gathered 600 treant lumbers in total.

"Space is about to run out in the 'Dimension Home' so I believe we should end today's work here, de aru." [Raypin]

Since we've already completed our goal, and since we still have time left, everyone agreed, and we ended today's work here. But while walking back out of the forest, Raypin-san suddenly pointed, and exclaimed,

"Ryouma! Look at that, de aru!" [Raypin]

In the direction Raypin-san was pointing, was a small, green sphere floating amidst the trees with a large fluff of dandelion attached above it.

What is that?

"What is that?" [Ryouma]

"It's a slime!" [Raypin]
"Slime!?' [Ryouma]
"It's a fluff slime, a slime with the power to fly! I don't believe Ryouma's ever raised one though, de aru." [Raypin]
"True, I've definitely never raised one. In fact, I didn't even know about it. Would it be possible to catch it now?" [Ryouma]
"A simple task, de aru. 'Pick Up'" [Raypin]

Raypin-san stretched his hand out towards the flying slime, and chanted a spell. Then suddenly, the slime appeared right in front of Raypin-san's hand, floating in the airspace directly in front of it.

"What was that magic?" [Ryouma]
"'Pick Up', a space magic that teleports the target near the caster's hand. It can only be used when the target can be seen. It's not an easy magic to aim, so there are few who use it. Depending on the target, it's possible to catch something without harming it, so it's quite useful. I've been using this magic in order to gather magical beasts for my research, de aru. I used this to catch grell frogs too." {Raypin}
"I see…" [Ryouma]

Come to think of it, he did mention catching grell frogs with magic. I guess he must've been referring to this magic then.

"Rather than that, hurry up and contract with it. We can't exactly be certain that we're safe here either, de aru." [Raypin]
"Right." [Ryouma]

I hurriedly contracted with the fluff slime. Looking at it closely, it's about the size of a fist. A slime that could be carried in one's hands.

After contracting with it, I stored it in the 'Dimension Home'. I thanked everyone along with Raypin-san for keeping watch while I contracted with it, then we began walking again.

After some time of walking, we got to the village before the sun had fully set. I quickly went back to our lodging, and used 'Monster Identify' on the fluff slime.

Fluff Slime
Skills
Flight Lv1
Growth Acceleration Lv5
Lighten Lv10
Photosynthesis Lv3
Absorption Lv1
Split Lv8

It has photosynthesis, so I guess it doesn't need digestion. As for absorption, that's for water. And this flight and growth acceleration… it's my first time seeing these kind of skills. And then this split level… it's high! Then again something that looks like a dandelion fluff is attached to it, so I suppose it multiplies just like one too?

For the meantime, in order to understand its skills better, I lifted the fluff slime up, and made it use 'Lighten'. Immediately, the fluff slime became so light to the point it seemed like it wasn't even there. It was quite light to begin with, but even then it still had some weight. Yet now it was as if even that little weight had disappeared. It was really light.

But it can only use the skill on itself. Then again, if it could use it on other things too, that'd be just way too convenient for others not to notice. How to say this… it's so light, it feels like it's about to float.

It's flight ability is probably because of this. A little sway from my arm seems to be more than enough to send it flying. But really, rather than flight, floating would be more apt. It seems it can fall to the ground by manipulating its weight to some extent, but the speed and direction is all up to the wind, and it can't do anything about it.

After observing the fluff slime, I asked Raypin-san a couple of things. And apparently, the fluff slime can go quite far by being dragged by the wind, so it could be seen almost anywhere. However, it doesn't reproduce much.

Don't reproduce much? But why? Even though it's level in splitting is so high.

When I asked that, apparently just as I had thought, the slime splits like a dandelion fluff would, but not all of the fluff would become a slime.

Moreover, it's irritating to have so many fluff floating around, so a nearby village would send people to exterminate it.

After we complete this request and I get some free time, I should go and see what this fluff slime can do.

Chapter 19

The next day.

Today, we're hunting treants again. But because I've gotten used to it already, the fighting's been going smoother compared to the first day.

If everything goes as planned, we'll be finishing the hunt by tomorrow, and then we can go home to Gimuru. This morning we filled up Raypin-san's 'Dimension Home', so we've been using my 'Dimension Home' to store the treant lumbers.

"Ha!" [Ryouma]

I swung my sword down, cutting a treant's face from its forehead down to its chin in one stroke. Then with another swing, I cut another treant's face that was on its right, diagonally up, cutting it into two parts. At that moment, a different treant's branch whipped towards me. Quickly, I dodged to the left, and then I lopped its face off from the side.

No matter how many times I do this, I can't help but think of its face as a mask every time it falls off like this.

While thinking of useless thoughts like that, I killed another three treants. Then after looking around me, I confirmed that there were no more treants left.

"Looks like Ryouma's gotten used to fighting treants already." [Wereanna]

"Ryouma has trained his body well in the way of the sword. That training also reflects in how fast he can learn new methods to defeat new opponents, de gozaru." [Asagi]

"There are no wastes in your movements, nyaa." [Miya]

"Thank you very much. My martial techniques were thoroughly beaten into me by my grandfather. I'm quite confident in it." [Ryouma]

The area we're in right now might be a bit dangerous, but we at least have the luxury to talk like this. Of course, letting our guard down too much is bad, but being too tense is just as bad. Something on this level is just right.

But then when we went deeper into the forest, the atmosphere suddenly changed. Using 'Magic Detection', I detected a great number of treants, almost uncountable.

"Raypin-san." [Ryouma]

"I know. There's a lot of them… Unfortunately, it's not possible to know exactly how many, de aru. Asagi." [Raypin]

"There's most likely an elder treant ahead. Let's proceed while keeping our escape route open. In the worst case, we'll have to retreat and just return to the guild with the information we've gathered, de gozaru." [Asagi]

And so, we proceeded with our guards up.

"Ha!" [Asagi & Ryouma]

"Nyaa!" [Miya]

"--!" [Mizelia]

"Ei!" [Syria]

"Wind Cutter!" [Raypin]

Before us were the forests of treants. They creeped slowly, and they came whipping their branches at us. But with our efforts combined, we managed to subjugate them.

The women attacked the treants' faces with their axes and hatchets. Asagi-san slashed with his long sword, striking towards an area beneath the treants' faces, killing them. Raypin-san supported us with his magic, while I killed all those behind to keep them from surrounding us.

We struggled like this, killing one treant after another, but the treants kept pouring in from deep the forest. Fortunately, the treants weren't that strong. Moreover, because the treants are walking and are uprooted, when we kill them, they just fall over, keeping our field of vision clear of obstruction.

"We're killing them just fine, but there's no end to them!" [Syria]

No one replied to Syria's remark, but deep inside, everyone agreed.

"According to 'Magic Detection', all the trees here are treants! Cut them all, de aru!" [Raypin]

"Don't push yourselves too much, alright? Remember, there's no shame in retreat!" [Asagi]

"I know!" [Wereanna]

"Life's more important!" [Mizelia]

Although everyone was saying that, they weren't really serious. They were just saying it to remind everyone. And after that, they all went to welcome the flooding forest of treants. As expected of A ranks and B ranks, something of this level can't even faze them.

I should also focus on my work. The treants headed here have also increased.

I put my sword away, and instead I ordered the sheath that was a big metal slime to separate. In the next moment, 100 metal slimes appeared at my feet. I took two from those, lifted them up, and ordered them to transform.

What the two slimes transformed into were throwing axes. Then I strengthened my body with ki, and motioning my body in full, I threw the axes.

"O..."

"O... Oo..."

The two axes flew through the air, drawing a beautiful arc in its trajectory. Two nearing treants tried to get me into their range, but the two axes flew into their foreheads, striking them dead. The two axes had successfully shot down the two treants.

After that I immediately took another metal slime, had it transform into an axe and threw it. Then i took another one, and another one, throwing the axes one after another towards the endless wave of treants.

After fighting with the treants all this time, I've finally come to understand that there's a deviation in the

distribution of magic power within the treants' bodies. The distribution is generally equal, but there is one place that has a greater concentration of magic power compared to the rest of its body. And that place is its weakness, its face.

Apparently, within the physiology of treants, the face serves as an important cornerstone for the circulation of magic power. In terms of human physiology, it would be the heart as it gathers magic power for the treants. Hurting the treant's face, causes that gathered magic power to leak out, thereby causing its death. If one takes the face of a treant as the heart, and its magic power as blood, then it's really not that much different from humans.

However, blood is still different from magic power. Because magic power can be located with 'Magic Detection'. That's why as long as one knows how to use 'Magic Detection', it's easy to spot its weak point. And just like now, one would be able to easily kill the treants. And at times when the face isn't visible, using 'Magic Detention' to locate it would easily take care of it.

That's why with all things considered, treants are easy to defeat. While I still think it's not good to let my guard down, the truth is that I'm really not being pressured much in this battle.

I'm also not using magic power, so I won't suffer the symptoms of magic exhaustion. Moreover, I've strengthened my body with Ki, making it hard for me to get tired. Now, if I was using normal throwing axes, then I wouldn't be able to attack once I run out of axes, but since I'm using metal slimes for throwing axes, the slimes can just come back on their own after being thrown. Which goes to say that I will never run out of ammo. In fact, I don't even have to pick them up.

On top of that, I know the position of their faces, so I can easily kill them in one throw. Moreover, when the slimes come back, the treants try to attack them. But at that moment, because their slow legs come to a halt, they become easy pickings. And I can then defeat them before they can get me into their attacking range. Honestly speaking, this is more work rather than actual fighting.

By the way, all the metal slimes that were attacked are all fine. They are basically lumps of metals, so the treant's branches' attacks, which are of course wood, have no effect on them.

Like this I one-sidedly subjugated all the treants that tried to surround us from behind. While the others, on the other hand, completely trampled on the treants in front.

In the blink of an eye, the treants' numbers had been greatly decreased, and the surrounding forest has been turned into nothing but a vast field of scattered fallen treants. The only thing left growing, were the few, normal trees.

"For the meantime, it looks like we've mostly cut them all done… Still, though, it's quite weird, de aru." [Raypin]

"What is?" [Ryouma]

At Raypin-san's mutterings, I asked him why.

"First of all, there're way too many treants. In fact, I've never seen this many treants yet. Second, although treants are trees that become magical beasts from the influence of magic power, it's my first time seeing such a wide scope of mutation into treants. Lastly, is that one." [Raypin]

To the direction Raypin-san had pointed in was nothing but a big tree from a distance. But as I could feel a large amount of magic power from that tree, it's most likely…

"Is that an elder treant?" [Ryouma]

"I think so, but… It's my first time seeing such a big elder treant with that much magic power. But on top that, I'm concerned why it's not attacking us, de aru." [Raypin]

Right after Raypin-san spoke, Miya-san came back at just the right time, and she asked Raypin-san a question.

"Isn't it possible that it just hasn't noticed us yet, nyaa?" [Miya]

"We've killed so much of its fellow treants, so no. It could also simply be afraid of us, thinking it can't win. But then in that case, it's strange that it's not running away, and is instead just remaining there." [Raypin]

Then in that case…

"I suppose there must be something there to explain why it's not moving." [Ryouma]

"That way of thinking is correct, de aru, but there's no precedent. At the very least, I've never heard of a situation where an elder treant neither runs nor attacks." [Raypin]

"It's a bit dangerous to leave it alone like this… So we should subjugate it, or if not, at least bring back information to the guild… Raypin, Ryouma, how's your magic power?" [Asagi]

"No problem, de aru." [Raypin]

"Same here; I mean to begin with, I didn't even really use all that much magic power." [Ryouma]

"Now that you mention it, that certainly seems to be the case, de gozaru. Who would've thought that slimes could actually be turned into axes and thrown… Well since that's how it is, let's keep our guards up, and rest for a bit before we go and hunt the elder treant, de gozaru." [Asagi]

With us hunting the elder treant having been decided, we confirmed the special characteristics of the magical beast again, and kept it in our minds to take care of its wood attribute magic. And then we took a short break.

During break, everyone seemed to show interest with my slime axe throwing. Especially Syria-san, who generally uses the bow.

But then just as our break was about to end and we were to head over to the elder treant, while still some place away from it, the metal slime acted weird.

"Please wait a moment." [Ryouma]

"What's wrong?" [Asagi]

"The metal slime seems to be… afraid? …It's started to panic." [Ryouma]

I can tell its status because of the contract's effect, but it's actually scared enough to want to run away at this very instant. This is the first time something like this has happened.

"Is it alright, nyaa?" [Miya]

"My apologies, but my metal slime won't be able to fight in this state." [Ryouma]

"I think it'd be best not to force it, de aru." [Raypin]

So since the metal slimes weren't in any state to fight, I stored them inside my 'Dimension Home'. But it's curious… the metal slimes have never been scared in this way before. For a moment, I thought their natural

enemy might be around, but after looking around, there wasn't anything around here but a single elder treant. And I've never heard of elder treants being the natural enemy of slimes.

Moreover, the only ones afraid are the metal slimes. The iron slimes seemed to be completely fine. So what exactly is wrong with the metal slimes? … Well, in any case, I'm happy that the iron slimes can fight. I do have some weapons I've prepared in my 'Item Box', but the iron slimes' blade is still better.

After that, we walked nearer towards the elder treant while paying attention to our surroundings.

"The left tree!" [Raypin]

"Nyaa!" [Miya]

We were heading towards the elder treant, and we walked over one of the trees from the sparsely scattered trees. According to my 'Magic Detection', that tree was nothing but a normal tree.

And Raypin-san most likely thought the same thing, but as soon as we stepped over that tree, the treant suddenly gained magic power, and attacked us. But then, Raypin-san quickly reacted, and Miya-san was able to kill it…

"What's the meaning of this?" [Raypin]

"Raypin?" [Asagi]

"This tree wasn't a treant just a moment ago, de aru. But just now, it suddenly became a treant. Something like this should be impossible, de aru." [Raypin]

While treants are magical beasts that become so after being influence by magic power, this is not something that happens instantaneously. It's something that normally happens only after some period of time.

But while that may be so, I felt some of the trees around gain magic power again.

"Raypin-san." [Ryouma]

"The treants are being born one after another." [Raypin]

"Well this was unexpected…" [Wereanna]

"Being caught unprepared with a situation like this is really out of our hands." [Asagi]

Well it's less than a while ago, so it won't be a problem, but still… this strange phenomenon is quite concerning. While thinking that, I focused on my 'Magic Detection' in order to subjugate the treants. But while doing so, I suddenly felt the presence ofmagic power in the ground.

At the end of that magic power's flow was the tree that had just turned into a treant. Seeing that, I focused once more, and this time, just as it did for the previous tree, I felt the flow creep in near my feet. Is this the source?

"There's something inside the soil! 'Break Rock' Breeze' !" [Ryouma]

I used 'Break Rock' to tear down the area I felt magic power, and using the wind magic, 'Breeze', I used a strong wind to blow away the fallen earth, revealing roots from which I could feel magic power flowing

within!

Raypin-san, having noticed the same thing, yelled.

"It's the root of an elder treant! …Could it be that the elder treant is using its roots to inject magic power into the trees, transforming them into treants, de aru? Come to think of it, it's said that treants greatly increase in numbers when an elder treant is spotted. This is a discovery worthy of surprise, de aru!" [Raypin]

"Subjugate first! Research later!" [Syria]

"In any case, does this mean there's no other way to resolve this situation other than to subjugate the elder treant?" [Mizelia]

"The possibility for that is quite high, de aru. If we leave this one alone, the treants will most likely increase even more, de aru." [Raypin]

"The elder treant is approximately 500m from here… I will close in to it in an instant, and finish it, de gozaru. Ryouma, please watch the back. We'll take care of the elder treant, so please stop all the treants from behind, de gozaru!" [Asagi]

"Understood!!" [Ryouma]

At my response, we immediately moved. Wereanna-san, Miya-san, Mizelia-san, and Asagi all went forward, deforesting the forest of treants that flooded from in front. Following that was me, Raypin-san, and Syria-san as we all continued towards elder treant.

Fortunately, the treants moved slowly, and we didn't receive any difficulty from the treants. But then the elder treant finally made its moved, and it started directly attacking.

We're still too far to get hit by its branches, so it instead pulled its roots from under the ground, and attacked us. Moreover, it was able to use wood magic just as mentioned in the info. It's roots extended, and it tried to catch us with it.

Raypin-san used 'Wind Cutter', and I along with everyone else used our weapons to cut the opponents down, but there's just too many of them, especially the ones coming from my feet. Dodging this isn't easy… If it's going to be like this, then!

" 'Pavement' !" [Ryouma]

Using the same 'Pavement' I did when creating my store, I pressed together the ground, and turned it into pavement. The treants' growth might be able to break through that, but I'm just using it to buy time. And just as expected, I was able to stop the treants from attacking me at my feet.

"I'll cover you!" [Ryouma]

"Thanks!" [Asagi]

Like this we charged towards the elder treant.

Chapter 20

As we swung against the elder treants' attacking roots, we closed in on it.

The elder treant was swarthy with a girth of over 10 meters wide, and a height of over 20 meters. Bulges and crevices could be seen here and there on its trunk, exuding an eerie aura. The face attached on its trunk, near its roots, was bigger than the others, being twice the size of an adult's height.

"Ryouma, Raypin, stay away from the range of the branches, and support from the outside! Syria, protect Ryouma and Raypin!" [Asagi]

I killed the slow treants one after another by casting pavement on the ground, and throwing iron slime axes against them, while Raypin-san supported with his magic and Syria-san protected us from the oncoming roots.

The elder treant took on heavy damage from Asagi's group's continuous attacks, but it was unexpectedly tough.

On top of the elder treant's size, the elder treant was able to use the wood magic, 'Grow', making it annoyingly tough. That magic normally shouldn't have a healing effect, but because the elder treant was a plant-type magical beast, the elder treant was able to restore its body by growing its own body. The speed of that healing was apparently also faster compared to other elder treants. The advantage is currently in our favor, but we can't let our guard down.

We continued fighting like that for some time until the elder treant suddenly let out an incomprehensible scream.

"OoOOOO!" [Elder Treant]

Then suddenly, the elder treant did something unexpected. And out of the elder treant's mouth appeared a dark sphere, which shot towards Wereanna-san.

"Tch! Now what!?" [Wereanna]

Wereanna-san managed to dodge, but because of the pursuing branches, she had no choice but to stop attacking the elder treant.

Just now, wasn't that the dark magic, 'Dark Ball'?

The elder treant may have stopped Wereanna-san with 'Dark Ball', but Miya-san is still… But just as I was thinking that, the elder treant suddenly spit out some sort of dark mist, forcing Miya-san to take a step back. Unfortunately, the hand that was holding her axe touched the mist, and in the blink of an eye, the axe became rusted.

"Nyaa!?" [Miya]
"That last one was dark ball! This elder treant can apparently use dark mage, de aru! And that effect… that's most likely also dark magic!" [Raypin]

…Hey, hey, no one said anything about this.

"There're too many unexpected things. Let's retreat first, and think up a plan, de gozaru!" [Asagi]

At Asagi's call, we all took a step back, and retreated.

We took a break in a place outside the treant's attack range, and discussed.

"Miya, how's your arm?" [Asagi]
"Nothing's wrong with my arm, but this thing's no good anymore, nyaa." [Miya]

As Miya said that, she showed everyone her axe. Her axe was completely rusted, and the edge of its blade could be seen crumbling.

"It turned into this after being touched by that black mist, nyaa." [Miya]
"That's rather severe." [Asagi]
"We won't be able to fight if our weapon is rusted." [Mizelia]

"Raypin, can't you think of something?" [Wereanna]
"I've also never heard of an elder treant that could use magic other than wood magic, de aru. And neither have I heard of dark magic that could cause weapons to rust. As for dealing with dark magic, we could strike it with healing white magic as white magic has an exorcising effect against dark magic, but unfortunately it's not possible to do that continuously during battle, de aru." [Raypin]

So that magic can cause metal to rust? ...Could it be that the reason the metal slimes were afraid was because of that? But then, why...

Wait, come to think of it…

Hmm… it's only a hypothesis, but I should probably bring this up with the group.

After explaining my hypothesis to everyone, we decided to fight the elder treant one more time.

The treant has a lot of surprises, but in terms of strength, it's not that much of a problem. Even if it does get dangerous, we can easily run away from it, so there's nothing wrong with trying out a thing or two.

"Let's go!" [Asagi]
""Pavement"" [Ryouma]

Casting pavement on the ground, I stopped the roots from attacking while we rushed towards it. As the elder treant came to notice our presence, it began to spit out black mist again.

"It's here!" [Asagi]
"Let's try it! [Ryouma]

As soon as I saw the mist, I threw one iron slime axe towards the face of the elder treant!

The iron axe slime drew a parabola in the air as it flew, piercing through the black mist.

"OOOOO!" [Elder Treant]

The iron slime axe spectacularly pierced into the center of the elder treant's forehead. And through the contract, I knew that the iron slime was safe.

"The iron slime is fine! As I thought, the iron slimes are immune to that magic!" [Ryouma]
"Alright, let's finish it, de gozaru!" [Asagi]

As Asagi-san said that, he headed for the elder treant's face. Miya-san, Mizelia-san, Wereanna-san followed him from behind. At the rearmost was me, firing fire arrows while I cut away at the branches.

What I proposed to everyone during the break was to use the transformed iron slimes as weapons and armors.

I reminded them about the time the metal slimes shook in fear. then I suggested that the reason that they might have been afraid could be because they were metal, causing them to fear for their lives as they sensed the elder treants' ability.

As soon as Raypin-san heard that, he understood where I was getting at.

Continuing, I argued that since the iron slimes didn't feel fear, despite being also metal like the metal slimes were, then they must have some way to defend against that mist. There, I taught them something I learned from my previous life. Of course, I presented it as if I had learned it from my grandfather in this world.

The purer the iron is, the harder it is to rust. The iron slimes I have contracted have been feeding all this time on iron that I made with alchemy, giving it a body with ultra-high purity iron.

To add to that, we also wondered whether or not the elder treant could cause all metals to rust in the same way as it did before, so we decided to fight it one more time.

Magic can make even impossible objects come to existence with magic power as long as one is able to imagine it. However, the same is not true for magic power. For magic power, one needs to follow to some

extent the shape of nature.

Although it's possible for magic with image to distort what is dictated by nature, the more the magic tries to do so, the greater the consumption of magic power. Moreover, there's also a limit to how much one can bend nature, which is why I knew that the magic wouldn't be able to cause a kind of metal that's difficult to rust, to rust.

In a long battle, however, the slimes might be in danger. But according to Raypin-san, we could throw one slime first, then look at its condition. If the experiment is a failure we could just take it and run away, while I heal it with the method Raypin-san told me. According to him, as long as the nucleus isn't affected, then the slime will be fine as long as I provide it some nourishment. So even if the surface gets rusted, it doesn't matter. As long as I stop the corrosion before it gets to the nucleus, the slime should be safe.

Putting together the information we had, we decided to aim for a quick battle.

Also, to be safe, we'll heal the iron slime with white magic once the battle is over. And in the case where we can't defeat the elder treant, then we could just retreat again.

Like that, we decided to challenge it once more.

"Ha!"

This time around, I'm also included in the vanguard.

The elder treant is attacking. The first attack were the branches, which came whipping from above. The second, the dark ball. The third, it blocked our path with its roots, at the same time, it tried to catch me, but I just cut it, and I slipped through, leaving me right in front of the elder treant's face.

I thought of slashing at it a direct hit, but the elder treant wasn't going to let me as it fired off another 'Dark Ball' accompanied by a whipping strike from above.

Twisting my body, I swung my sword to meet the branches, drawing a circle, and cutting the branch off in a single stroke.

Continuing, I dodged the incoming 'Dark Ball' while closing the distance. Then underneath the elder treant's face, I cut what appeared to be its neck. With my blade clad in ki, it was extremely sharp, and I cut through its face with no resistance. Magic power then seeped out from the wound left on the elder treant's face.

"UoOO!" [Elder Treant]

The elder treant panicked, and immediately tried to close the wound with its wood magic, but we weren't just going to stand by and watch.

" 'Flame Lance' !" [Raypin]

Raypin-san's intermediate fire magic struck into the elder treant. And as one would expect from having fire magic driven into its body, the attack had a huge effect, causing the elder treant's healing to greatly slow.

Miya-san and the rest weren't took advantage of that opening, and started releasing a barrage of attacks towards the treant and the branches around it.

But as for me, I did not join in their barrage, and instead I prepared for my attack, ordering the big iron slime that was currently a blade to transform again.

I put it down, and 15 slimes split out of it. The big slime quickly used 'Enlarge', and using both of its hands, it formed a loop, turning into an iron ball big enough to have to be carried in both arms. Around that iron ball, sharp thorns and a semi-circle-shaped grip with a hole in its center was attached to it. The iron slimes that split off then each turned into a loop, and connected themselves to my right arm and to the iron ball's grip. With this the weapon has changed from a blade to a chain and ball.

Right now, the big iron slime can change freely at will into a number of weapons. It could, of course, change into the weapon I used before, the blade and the throwing axes, but it can also change into a spear, a great sword, a hammer, into all sorts. One of those types is this iron ball. Moreover, if I feel like it, I could even have it change into a scythe, the same weapon the shinigamis use. So having it change into an iron ball is a piece of cake.

Incidentally, this iron ball is something I saw in a weapon shop of this world. Using that as reference, I had

the slimes transform into it. It's a kind of weapon that specializes in one-hit attacks meant for large magical beasts. When using it, I have to first strengthen it with either magic or qi gong, so it takes some time to master. The skill to use this iron ball is apparently included in my Fundoujutsu (Weight) skill, so I'm able to use it. It's use is mostly limited to fighting against large monsters though…

The chains jingled as I pulled on them. The iron ball was heavy, but with qigong, my strengthened body was able to wield it.

"I'm ready." [Ryouma]
"Alright, let's go!!" [Asagi]

As soon as I said that, Asagi-san gave the signal. Everyone who was still barraging the elder treant with attacks nonstop immediately opened a path for me.

With the elder treant's face as my target, I put all of my strength, and sent the iron ball flying towards the elder treant's nose!

The instant the iron ball hit the elder treant, a crack appeared on the elder treant's face, and magic power gushed out. After having been hit all this time, its resistance was at its worst, leaving it unable to resist the force of the iron ball.

I was originally planning to hit 4 or 5 times, but with this, the battle might already be over. And even the surrounding roots and branches have stopped moving. It's not completely subjugated yet, but…

"Ryouma, finish it off." [Asagi]
"After all, this victory is thanks to Ryouma." [Syria]
"So you should be the one to put an end to this battle." [Mizelia]

So I pulled on the chains again, and struck at the elder treants forehead with all of my might.

A booming thick sound exploded, then the sound of the elder treant's face collapsing resounded. The gushing magic power grew fiercer, and in the next moment, no more magic could be felt from the elder treant.

"With this, it's down for real, right?" [Ryouma]
"I can't feel any more magic power, so it should be fine, de aru." [Raypin]

After ensuring everything was ok, I went to heal the iron slimes with healing magic. Well, it doesn't seem like anything's wrong, but just in case. In any case, it's good that nothing bad happened.

While I was shooting 'Light Ball' at the iron slimes, I spoke with Asagi-san and the others about our movement from here on out. And it's been decided that we will be going back to the village first, report to the guild there, then get some help to transport all the logs.

We weren't planning to hunt this much, but leaving it would be a waste, so we might as well make use of it. It won't all fit into mine and Raypin-san's 'Dimension Home', so this time around, we'll have to get some actual transport. As for the fees, the guild can apparently take care of it as long as we do the papers properly.

Like this we went back to the village, reported to the guild, and retrieved the lumbers the next day.

Chapter 21

The next day.

The guild lent us 15 men, and we took them with us to the place where we fought the elder treant. Our plan is to gather all the leftover lumber from the aftermath of our fight. However, the only lumbers we will be taking with us are those that can fit into Raypin-san's 'Dimension Home'. Everything else will be stored in this town's and the guild's storehouses.

When we got to the scene, the adventurers that came with us were shocked. They couldn't believe the number of treants that seven people had managed to subjugate.

Then again, it probably can't be helped as the total number of treants we subjugated were over 2,000.

The treants kept coming one after another, so we had no choice but to kill them off. And since hitting them in the face would finish them in one hit, we were able to kill them quite quickly. As a result, we ended up subjugating over 2,000 treants all in all.

Incidentally, I started to worry when I realized we had just killed so many treants that were originally trees of this forest. So I asked about it, and I found out that the trees of this forest were apparently of a variety known as Torigiri. The places they grow in is limited, but in exchange, they are vigorous, and grow fast. And within half a year of being cut, they'll grow back. Even growing them from a seedling would only take a year before they could be cut as lumber. So there's really no problem since the trees that have been cut will be back by next year. Moreover, the town here will be benefitting too as they will be getting the trees. And besides, there aren't a lot of people who go this deep to get lumber anyway.

Hearing that explanation reminded me that this world is a different world.

If this were Earth, how many years would it take for a seed to grow into a tree? And yet here it won't even take a year. Right, I've almost forgotten, but… this is definitely a different world. There are times when Earth's common sense won't apply to it.

After that, we gathered lumber while taking care of any treants that we came across. Asagi-san and the others kept all the lumbers in one spot, while me and Raypin-san stored it in our 'Dimension Homes', carrying the lumbers to the town.

Thanks to all the extra man power and the magic, we were mostly finished by 3PM. So we decided to inform the adventurer's guild in Gimuru that a large number of treant lumber will be transported via cart. So I brought out my nightmare rimel bird in order to contact them.

With this, the treant lumber mission came to a close, and the rest of the helpers went back to the village.

But as for the seven us, we still have a job to do. That job is to disassemble and recover the elder treant.

The request we got from Gimuru does not include the elder treant. Since we hunted it, we could do whatever we wanted with it, but if we were to ask the guild for help in harvesting it, we would have to pay them accordingly.

The elder treant lumber is a first class material for wands, so we didn't want to discard it. So instead, we decided to harvest it by ourselves. Only, because it's so big, it's going to take some time.

First comes cutting the branches. I could climb the ladder I prepared beforehand, and cut its branches. But because the elder treant is so big, there are some branches that I can't reach even with this ladder.

So I had everyone else use the ladders to reach the ones that they could, while I opened my 'Item Box' and took out a rope made out of the sticky slimes' thread that's as strong as a wire. At the end of that rope, I attached a ring and knotted it. Then I had the metal slime cling to it and transform into a claw. With this the rope has turned into a grappling hook.

I swung the grappling hook, and carefully aiming at my target, I threw it.

The grappling hook flew, and it wrapped around a thick branch. After confirming that it was safe, I climbed

the rope. When I got near enough, I started using 'Wind Cutter' to cut the surrounding branches. When there was nothing left to cut, I moved to a different part, and did the same thing.

At first I thought it was convenient that the branches would just fall to the ground, but then I remembered that they were also important ingredients. In fact, the branches were even more suited for wands than the trunk. And because we have to cut the branches first, there's a chance that they might break when they hit the ground. It's too bad, but it can't be helped.

We silently continued to hack away like this, and somehow someway we were able to finish cutting off the branches within the day. But now I'm completely exhausted… If it was only once or twice of going up and down the tree, it wouldn't matter. But having to do it that much just really takes everything out of you.

Come to think of it, I don't really use wands all that much, do I? So since there's material, maybe I should get one for myself?

The next day.

We're going to continue harvesting the elder treant today.

We finished cutting off the branches yesterday, so today we're going to dig out its roots. And so we did, but just as we were working, something unexpected happened.

As I dug out the area around the elder treant with the earth slimes using earth magic, I found old, crumbling wooden boxes and stone boxes beneath it.

"You guys! Look at this!" [Ryouma]

Asagi-san and the others came over.

"Is something the matter?" [Asagi]
"Did something happen?" [Mizelia]
"There's something buried here. Look." [Ryouma]
"This is… A wooden box?" [Mizelia]
"Why is something like this…" [Syria]
"For the meantime, we should unbury it and then take a look inside." [Raypin]

Following Raypin-san's suggestion, we retrieved the box, and took a look inside. Inside was a great number of muddy, white stones. Apparently, these stones are magic jewels that have already been used. Magic jewels are transparent before use, but afterwards, they turn into a muddy, whitish hue.

We took a look at all the different boxes, and it turns out they were all full of used up magic jewels. But there were also some magic jewels that weren't fully used up yet. Amongst those were neutral magic jewels and dark magic jewels. After that, we continued searching for a while, and we came to realize just how many jewels there were.

For the meantime, we thought we should inform the guild about this matter, so Raypin-san went back to the town, and brought back an investigator from the guild.

When he came back, we continued our investigation until eventually we came across a number of dead human corpses. The corpses had already rotten away, but some of their belongings remained. Amongst their belongings was a ledger that belonged to a magic jewel merchant. From that we quickly found out that the merchant was a smuggler. And we concluded that all these magic jewels most likely belonged to him.

We don't know if this place was supposed to be his hidden stash or the place where a deal was supposed to take place, but regardless, we now know the reason why that elder treant turned out that way. The elder treant absorbed the energy from the magic jewels, causing it to grow faster and bigger. And because of the power of the magic jewels, it was able to summon a great forest of treants, even becoming able to use dark magic itself. As for why it didn't move? We figured that was most likely because it couldn't after being weighed down by all of those boxes of magic jewels.

After the investigation concluded, we toppled the elder treant sideways. Then using large saws made out of the iron slimes and metal slimes, we cut the elder treant for easy storage. And then we stored it in my 'Dimension Home'.

With this, we've finished our business in this town, and will be going back to Gimuru tomorrow.

But before that, we held a party inside the 'Dimension Home' to thank each other for all our efforts.

"There's still some way back home, but we've finally successfully gathered all the needed treant lumbers. So since we've basically completed our task, let's drink our fill today! Kanpai!" [Asagi]
"Kanpai!" [Everyone else]

At Asagi-san's lead, we all began to eat and drink.

Today we're having tempura along with our drinks. Actually, I'm partly the reason why. The thing is, there are a lot of edible wild plants in the forest, so all sorts were being sold by the town grocer. Then when I saw all the different plants, I ended up mumbling to myself, "I wonder if those'll taste good when turned into tempura?" But then right at that moment, it just so happened that Asagi-san managed to hear me. And as soon as he caught wind of the word 'Tempura' he started talking zealously about it. The others heard about it too as a result, and after they said that they wanted to try it too, we ended up having tempura to go along with our liquor.

The others didn't actually know anything about tempura. It just so happens that I talked about it from time to time during our travel, so they were quite interested in it.

But you know what's surprising? I found out that this country actually doesn't have a lot of deep-fried food. Well Asagi-san's hometown has them, but apparently deep-fried food isn't really a thing here.

And the reason behind that is because it takes up a lot of oil, making it luxurious. You can't keep the oil either, so you have no choice but to throw them away. On top of that, because of a lack of culinary knowledge, deep-fried cooking is said to cause fires, making it a food that's generally difficult to access for most families.

As for me, I think it's a pity that people don't know the taste of deep-fried food. But at the same time, I do know that it's true that it costs a lot of oil. And you also can't keep the oil since it's bad for the body… Well, in my case, I could just use alchemy to remove the oxygen from the oxidized oil, making it possible for me to use it again as long as it's not dirty, but that's an exception.

I've actually been using alchemy in cooking like with juice or oil, but it does make me wonder from time to time. Am I using alchemy properly? But well… it's convenient so I don't really feel like stopping either way.

"Ryouma, your slimes really are strange, huh?" [Wereanna]
"Well it's not really strange for slimes to be omnivorous and drink liquor, but…" [Raypin]
"They're not just eating, they're actually carefully tasting the food and the wine." [Mizelia]

Right, actually, on top of the three guys and three girls, we also have a slime eating with us.

I caught this slime with the intention of using it as a part of my magic experiment, but it still hasn't evolved yet. It likes dark magic, but as part of my experiment, I fed it wood magic instead. But then at some point in time, it started to drink with me whenever I would drink by myself.

When I first poured it wine, it finished it in one gulp, so it didn't really feel like we would become drinking buddies. But then when I varnished the sticky slime's sticky liquid on a slime-purposed wine cup, it gradually began to properly drink with me. And lately, it would pour alcohol for me whenever my cup would run dry, and it would even eat as it drank.

As I was explaining that to everyone, the slime suddenly began to shake.

"Hmm? Could it be–" [Raypin]
"What's the matter, nyaa?" [Miya]
"The slime's evolving." [Ryouma]
"Eh!?" [Miya]

There's no doubt about it, this slime is evolving. Everyone focused their eyes on the slime. And just like the other slimes, the slime began to release and absorb magic power until it finally evolved.

Drunk Slime

Skills:

Create Alcohol (Ethyl) Lv4
Disease Resistance Lv3
Digestion Lv5
Absorption Lv1
Split Lv1

Divine Protection:
The God of Wine, Tekun

…Well it drinks wine, I guess drunk slime's perfect for it then. Same goes for its 'Create Alcohol (Ethyl)'. And of course, it's a given that the cause is drinking alcohol. But why does it have Tekun's divine protection? I mean to begin with, you could actually grant slimes, divine protections?

…Well, I'll just ask Tekun about it later. For the meantime, let's take a look at what magic it likes… Is it darkness? Water? Wood? Which is it? It used to like darkness, and I gave it wood magic. As for water… well it did drink water regularly… is that the reason?

Then while I was caught up in my thoughts, Raypin-san suddenly called out to me.

"Ryouma, is something the matter, de aru?" [Raypin]
"Ah, umm… well it turns out that the slime evolved into a drunk slime. And it has the skill, 'Create Alcohol (Ethyl)', which probably spits out alcohol." [Ryouma]
"Another strange slime, de aru?" [Raypin]

I brought out a cup and showed them the 'Create Alcohol (Ethyl)' skill. As expected the drunk slime spit out liquid that reeked of alcohol. Using 'Identify' I found out that it had 40% concentration, and was harmless to humans, so I drank it.

"Well, it's wine alright, but…" [Ryouma]
"But?" [Raypin]
"It has no taste." [Ryouma]

It didn't have any particular taste or smell. It wasn't delicious. This probably shouldn't be drunk like this. Maybe if I mixed it with fruit juice or something I could turn it into fruit wine. Yeah, I should research this.

After I thought that to myself, we toasted one more time. This time to the slime's successful evolution. Then after enjoying ourselves with the food and liquor, the day came to an end.

Chapter 22

Half a year later… (A year since parting with the duke's family.)

Half a year has passed since subjugating the elder treant. Since then the seasons have changed, and now, the weather has gotten warm.

During this time, Gimuru has greatly changed, and has become more bustling than ever. This change was brought about by the opening of the previously mentioned new town and arena. As a result, workers coming in from other cities have increased, and the various different guilds have been buzzing with work.

But such things mattered little to me, and instead I've been focusing on raising my rank and furthering my training.

"…Looks like another job done." [Ryouma]

I'm currently a month's distance away from Gimuru in Mt. Surure, exterminating the nest of a magical beast known as karifu monkey. The karifu monkey has an inclination to mob and run away to trees when attacked, making it a troublesome opponent.

But with this, my training has finally reached a place where I only need to put in a little more effort before I can finally rest. As a part of that, I've been promoted to D Rank, and after this request, I'll be a C Rank.

I stored the corpses of the karifu monkeys into my 'Dimension Home'. Then I cut off their right ears as trophy to serve as proof of the job's success. As for the rest of the corpses, I fed it to my slimes.

The slimes feasted on the karifu monkeys, and when the bloody slimes wanted to split, I let them, and then I contracted them. I've been hunting a lot lately, so the bloody slimes now number four.

After that, I rested for a bit, and then I descended the mountain. There's a cliff until the foot of the mountain, but it'd take too long to use a different route. So I climbed straight down the cliff instead.

" 'Rock Climbing' " [Ryouma]

I activated my original earth magic, 'Rock Climbing'.

Thanks to this past year of training my 'Magic Manipulation', I'm now able to wrap my limbs in magic power to use 'Create Block' to create footholds for my limbs, allowing me to climb up and down cliffs such as these.

This technique of wrapping one's limbs in magic power to use techniques is known as magic battle technique. This battle technique was originally used with offensive magic, but it's now an obsolete ability.

Magic battle technique requires a high level of 'Magic Manipulation' to use. Moreover, with the invention of the magic weapons that allows its wielders to demonstrate a similar effect to that of battle techniques without any training, the people practicing the technique greatly fell. And eventually, people forgot about it.

But it's not just that though, as there's also the danger in using it that caused it to become obsolete. Magic battle technique is an extremely delicate skill. Every practitioner must take care not to lose his focus. Otherwise, if a hole is perforated through the film of magic power due to lack of concentration, then the practitioner will get hurt. If his limbs are clad in fire magic, then he'll find himself burned. If electricity, then he'll get electrocuted.

I thought up this skill when I remembered a light novel from my previous life. I tried that out during practice, and I was able to somehow form a shape. After practicing for a while, I managed to resurrect a forgotten technique.

Eventually I'd love to be able to pull this off alongside Qigong, but for now it's impossible. It's certainly difficult to fire off magic while controlling ki, but it's definitely not impossible. So for now, I'll make it my goal to be able to cast magic while using qigong.

Magic battle techniques are really quite useful though. Not only can I wrap it around my limbs, but even around my weapons. And with this, I have more tools to deal with the undead than ever.

I thought those things to myself as I descended Mt. Surure. When I reached the foot of the mountain, I went to the nearest town, and reported my success to the guild there.

"I've finished this request. Please confirm." [Ryouma]

I handed a sack full of karifu monkey ears to the guild counter.

"Understood…… I've confirmed it. With this the request's conditions have been fulfilled. Amazing, to actually be able to kill off over 80 karifu monkeys by yourself. There's been a lot of them lately, so even D Rank parties couldn't subjugate them all. Thank you for taking care of it.

Moreover, due to having fulfilled the promotion conditions for C Rank with the completion of this request; Takebayashi-sama, from now on, you are a C Rank Adventurer." [Guild Receptionist]

After receiving my reward and C Rank guild card, I thanked the receptionist, and left the guild.

Then I headed for the country's westernmost city, Teressa.

I'm feeling good after completing the karifu monkey request, and getting promoted, so I'm just dropping by there to have a little bit of fun. But my main objective this time is to go the maze known as the Town of Departed Spirits. It's what you would call a dungeon.

In this world, there are three kinds of dungeon. The man-made, the god-made, and the magic-made. Each of these dungeons have their own respective features.

The man-made dungeons are, as the name implies, made by men. A relic of history. There are also those that were constructed by adventurers and soldiers for the sake of training. There are, however, few cases where people came out rich from these type of dungeons.

The god-made dungeons are also similar in that as the name implies they are made by gods. There's nothing in this world that could threaten the destruction of the world, but when there is a threat that the humans can't contest or something that threatens humanity's extinction, Gayn would create a dungeon such as this to serve as man's relief. The people who step into this dungeon can find in it divine armaments or great power. Then with the help of that power, humanity can fight off the threat.

But on top of that, the god-made dungeons only appear in dangerous situations. It also disappears after being explored once, so finding one is a rare privilege.

The last one, the magic-made dungeons. Unlike the other dungeons, these ones aren't made by any person in particular, but rather, are a natural occurrence after magic power naturally accumulates in one area. There are plenty of magical beasts within these dungeons. And although it is the most dangerous type, it is also the most profitable large magic jewels and magic ores can be collected from here.

The dungeon I will be going to this time around, the Town of Departed Spirits, is a naturally formed dungeon by magic. A magic-made dungeon so to speak. As the name implies, it's inhabited by zombies, skeletons, races with no actual body, and lots of undead-type magical beasts. It's supposedly the execution site of criminals in the past.

Once I arrive, I'm gonna go ahead and defeat a bunch of undead-type magical beasts. Then along the way, I'm going to pick up an herb known as Everlasting Darkness. This herb is needed in order to concoct an insect repellant that could keep the leech and other pests living in the Great Forest of Shurus. After I concoct that insect repellant, I'll have completed my preparations to go into the forest.

It sure feels great knowing that I'm almost done with my preparations… In all sorts of ways… In all sorts…

My training has progressed quite favorably, but there were also a lot of things that happened before my coming fight. It might be because of those things that I started acquiring new skills. For example, from the time I started learning that magic battle technique I used a while ago, I've learned 'Elixir Concoction', 'Construction Magic', 'Chantless Casting', 'Torture', 'Assassination', 'Cursed Song', 'The Power of Life or Death'… As for why I learned skills like this, well…

'Elixir Concoction' is probably because I was mixing my potion making with my alchemy when I was making medicine for my medicine slimes.

I investigated a bit after that, and I found out that there are times when either a new skill, a synthesized skill, or a transformed skill/magic could be made after fulfilling some conditions. When a synthesized skill has been made, it will show up in the status board.

The construction magic is the magic that I used to build my store. The 'Create Block', 'Pavement', 'Circle Saw'… etc. And according to the magic god, Fer Noevir, the four magic types: architecture, molding, woodworking, and painting are included there.

'Chantless Casting' is, as the name implies, the ability to cast spell without chanting anything. I learned this thanks to the rimel birds and the wind slimes.

The rimel birds can't talk, and the slimes don't even have vocal chords. So why are they able to use magic? When I thought that to myself, I started researching in order to find an answer. And from my research, I discovered that as long as one has the right image, attribute, and enough magic power, then it's possible to cast magic without any chants.

When I tried it out at first, the magic casted was weaker than the ones casted with chants. But after continued practice with the rimel bird and wind slimes as a model, I eventually managed to cast low-level elementary magic without any decrease in its power.

Now, about the 'Torture' skill. Once upon a time, while I was walking by myself in the mountains, some bandits came out, and tried to kidnap me. They probably thought I'd be easy pickings since I look eleven on the outside… Although I'm actually already twelve.

Anyway, I managed to beat them up, and one of the bandits let slip that they were planning to kidnap me. From that I deduced that they had already kidnapped some other children.

So I went ahead and asked them where their hideout was, but they wouldn't talk. Because of that, I had no choice but to hurt them while using healing magic until I managed to make them T-A-L-K. It was then that I learned the 'Torture' skill.

I headed to the hideout of the bandits afterwards, and after a bit of work, I learned 'Assassination'. I went back to Gimuru, and I asked Fei-san and Li Ling-san about it, and apparently, the 'Assassination' skill is something that can be learned after having learned 'Covert Arts', 'Hidden Weapons', 'Short Sword Arts', 'Fundoujutsu', and 'Throwing Arts'.

But I already had those skills since way before, so why didn't it activate? Apparently I was missing the last piece of the puzzle, experience in assassinating a human. Of course, not just once or twice too.

I've dealt with magical beasts plenty of times, but I've never had much experience with human opponents. But all that changed when I started travelling, and started beating up lots of bandits.

And then during that time when I had to save the children, well it was important, so I let the slimes go wild outside the bandits' hideout, while I had the earth slimes dig a tunnel under the ground with earth magic. Then I sneaked through that tunnel, and rescued the kids. After which, I bumped into the bandit boss by chance, so I captured him, and got rid of his followers. That's probably the reason why I acquired this skill.

Li Ling-san and Fei-san congratulated me after I finished telling my story. "Now, the boss is finally a first rate assassin," they said. Apparently, getting experience as an assassin is proof of being a first rate assassin, and is something worth celebrating.

As for the kids I saved, they were taken in by the nearest village. The bandit boss fessed up where they were selling the children, so I spared his life, and handed him over to the guards of a big town along with the information. A few days later, I heard that the guards managed to also catch the illegal slave merchant that was buying the slaves.

Next is the 'Cursed Song' skill. The 'Cursed Song' is the resulting skill from the synthetization of musical performance (instrument) and singing, brought about by dark magic and 'Chantless Casting'. When I saw the nightmare rimel bird, Einz, attack mentally with its cries, I thought to try singing a gloomy song from my previous life while casting 'Depression', a powerful magic that causes fear and anxiety, without chanting.

The bandits who heard my song were all affected. 'Depression' was originally supposed to be a target spell, unable to hit more than one target at the same time, yet somehow it affected everyone.

So I investigated a bit, and I found out that I had lost the skills 'musical performance (instrument)' and

'singing', and had gained the skill 'Cursed Song'.

Next is 'The Power of Life or Death' skill. I have no idea why its name is so exaggerated, I just held back. That's all really. I just captured some bandits alive to get information from, and then during my free time, I went to the church in Gimuru and trained with the kids, and then all of the sudden I learned this skill.

"I'm happy to see that I've learned a new skill, so of course I'm not mad. But couldn't it have been worded in a more peaceful manner?" [Ryouma]

There are a lot of things to think about, but I've definitely learned a lot within this past year. Don't misunderstand though, training wasn't the only thing I've done.

Just a few days ago, our branch stores increased by three. If you include the one in Renauph, there are now four branch stores. Karla-san left the three stores under the care of Caulkins-san, Tony-san, and Robelia-san.

I talked to Karla-san about them, and surprisingly, it turned out that Caulkins-san was actually the best when it came to handling money. We were worried about him because we heard that he once lost all of his money, but from the looks of things, that failure has actually turned him for the better. And now, he's not only good at management, but also really devoted when it comes to handling money.

Now, as for the last store, I left it to a man I was introduced to by Serge-san. His name is Falzen. I've met him several times before, but most likely because of his travels, his skin's tanned. And despite being Serge-san's age, he looks much older. He used to be a peddler, but because of his wounds he couldn't continue, and so he dropped by Serge's for help.

As a slave magic practitioner, he had his slave demons pull his cart as he would travel to dangerous regions crawling with magical beasts with his group to sell his goods. But as bad luck would have it, his group was attacked by a herd of magical beasts. Then immediately after, they were attacked by a group of bandits. Falzen-san and his slave demons were greatly fatigued from the ceaseless fighting, yet somehow someway they managed to repel the bandits. At the last moment, however, one of the bandits nocked an arrow as revenge, and poor Falzen took an arrow to the knee.

Reminds me of a certain guard, I thought. But I guess stuff like that is common occurrence in this world. And even the man himself said that he's lucky just to keep his life.

With a long history of trade and slave magic under his belt, Falzen-san is no doubt one of the best employees I could ask for.

Also, since he went out of business, a part of his guards that escorted his group also went out of business. And just like him, they dropped by the town in search of a new job. When I heard that, I quickly went out to look for them. And after much discussion, I was able to hire them too.

During their series of unfortunate mishaps, the merchant group that Falzen-san traveled with, suffered a considerable amount of casualty, leading to a reduction in the carts within the group. With the number of people and carts to be escorted, reduced. The group decided to let go of some of the guards.

I assigned half of the newly employed guards to Falzen-san's shop. The other half I sent over to Caulkins-san. When I later got back to the Gimuru, I contacted the different branches to see how they were doing. And fortunately, they were all doing well.

After that's just various stuff. In general, when I'm in Gimuru, I'm resting. When I'm out, I'm either working or training. During my travels I would focus in my training, and when I'm in Gimuru, I would hang around the town, and talk with the people. I would also spend my days researching as my hobby.

As a result, I started to take requests from Gimuru less and less… But some time later, I realized that amongst the adventurers that I would meet in the town, there are some who would refer to me as "Cleaner." Moreover, they've been increasing.

After I asked about it, it turned out that it was the nickname of a peculiar adventurer with abilities that put him above the rest. News of such an aspiring newcomer has even made its way to the nearby towns.

They got the name cleaner from that time when I cleaned the latrine pits. From that time when I cleaned up all those ruffians when I opened my store. From my recent actions when I would frequently deal with the bandits on the road, arresting them, and handing them to the guards. And from the fact that whenever I would hunt monsters, the only thing that would be left are the trophies (as evidence that I finished the mission) and the parts that can sell. But for everything else, nothing. Not even the bones would remain.

I was a bit embarrassed when I first heard it, but lately, I've gotten used to it. Well, like this, I feel like I can continue with my training smoothly. The slimes are doing great too. Yeah, let's keep going like this from now on.

... Alright, now let's speed up our pace so we can get to Teressa faster!

Chapter 23

I continued to walk through the mountain road while looking at the dreary surroundings. I'm already sick from looking at this scenery, but then I saw the gates of the Town of Teressa.

Today I'm going to spend the night in this town, and then tomorrow I will be heading for the labyrinth. But what should I do for the inn? I have to make the meals by myself, but since I have my 'Dimension Home', it might be better to just stay there rather than to spend the night at a cheap inn. Well, let's take a look at the town first, shall we?

Well the town doesn't seem bad at all, so depending on the state of the inn, it might be better to spend the night there instead. But it's almost afternoon, so I should probably go ahead and have lunch first.

After walking around the town for a while, I saw an inn with a stable in which a carriage was parked.

"Mn? This is…" [Ryouma]

The inn looked to be a bit too luxurious, so I was going to just walk pass it, but… Where did I see this carriage before? Hmm… Did I make a mistake?

At the side of the carriage was a familiar coat-of-arms… When I thought about it, I remembered. It's the same carriage that I rode on last year from the Forest of Gana to the town of Gimuru.

Why is it here!?

As I was thinking that, I noticed someone sneaking in from behind. I turned toward her. When I did, I saw a brown-skinned beauty with silver hair extending until her shoulders, wearing glasses. The distance between us was no more than 3m.

She got so close, and yet I wasn't able to notice her at all… If she had a spear with her, I could have been hit… I need to be more careful.

"Oh my, looks like I've been caught. Your instincts are pretty good, huh?" [Girl]
"Who are you?" [Ryouma]

Because she went near me while hiding her presence, my guard was up, and was a little impolite.

"Oh, I'm sorry, did I frighten you by any chance? I just wanted to startle you a bit. It's because you were staring at that carriage so intently, so I was wondering to myself what you were doing, and then I suddenly thought of playing a prank." [Girl]

True, she certainly doesn't seem to have any ill will…

Suddenly a man's voice called out from behind the girl.

"Remiri-sama, so you were here? It's almost time for lunch, so… Oh? Could you possibly be… Ryouma-sama?" [Man]

This voice…

When I looked toward the direction of that familiar voice, what greeted me was that silver-haired man dressed in a butler's uniform.

"Sebasu-san!" [Ryouma]
"Eh? Sebasu-chan, is he someone you know?" [Remiri]

The person there was none other than the head butler of the duke's household, the person who taught me dimension magic, Sebasu-san. From the looks of things this girl is Sebasu-san's acquaintance. So I guess it's safe for now, right?

"Remiri-sama, he is our friend. However, I didn't expect that we'd actually meet at a aplace like this." [Sebasu]
"Friend? By 'our', you don't just mean yours, but also Rheinbach-chan's as well, right? [Remiri]

Just who is this girl? Even though she looks to be only 20 years old, or at the very least at the latter half of

her 10s, and yet she actually affixes 'chan' to Sebasu-san and Rheinbach-sama's names? I have no idea who she is, but now that I look at her again, she is certainly quite the beauty.

She looks young. And although she's still taller than me, for an adult woman she's on the smaller side. Also the front of the robe she's wearing is open, so I know she has good style.

Her chest is also unusually bigger compared to her height, and her waist is thin. Her figure's like the ones that you could see in the gravure idol mags in Earth. Her body's healthy, but it doesn't look she trained her body for fighting. She probably doesn't fight with a weapon, though she does look to be quite nimble.

"Sorry for scaring you just a while ago, ok? My name is Remiri Cremis. I'm a wizard." [Remiri]
"My name is Ryouma Takebayashi, sorry for the delayed introduction." [Ryouma]
"Well, since you two are done introducing yourselves. Let's move to a different place, shall we?" [Sebasu]
"Right. Do you mind, Ryouma?" [Remiri]
"Not at all." [Ryouma]

Sebasu-san's coming too, so it should be fine. But really, what is Sebasu-san doing in a place like this? Oh, but it seems Rheinbach-sama is here as well, so I guess he's accompanying him.

When I went with Sebasu-san, I was led to the inn in front of us. And then we kept walking until we reached a room. Sebasu-san was just about to knock, when suddenly Remiri opened the door and pulled me by hand inside.

"Rheinbach-chan, there's a customer–" [Remiri]
"Wai– Oh, umm… Long time no see." [Ryouma]

When I entered the room, the unchanged figure of Rheinbach-sama entered my vision, and I said hello. Inside the room, there was another man around Rheinbach-sama's age, seating on the couch. Looks like they were talking about something.

"Ryouma-kun? You've grown quite a bit since the day we parted at Gimuru… But why are you here?" [Rheinbach]
"I just dropped here by coincidence during my training. And then as I was walking around the town, I saw the duke's carriage, and then…" [Ryouma]

As I was saying that, I looked towards Remiri-san. Following my eyes, Rheinbach-sama and that other guy also looked at Remiri-san. With everyone staring at her, Remiri-san gave an extremely short and simple explanation.

"I brought him here because it looked like he knew Rheinbach-chan." [Remiri]

After that we each introduced ourselves, and then I was told what relationship Rheinbach-sama had with her and the reason why Rheinbach-sama and the others were here.

Apparently, Rheinbach-sama is currently in the midst of his travels with his friends. And Sebasu-san is as expected accompanying him.

Speaking of friends, the ones he's referring to are Remiri-san and the other man, whose name is Shiva Gardak. Well who would've thought, it's the former knight commander that Rheinbach-sama wanted me to hire when I opened the store. Rheinbach-sama mentioned that he retired because of his age and has gotten weaker, but with that muscular body of his, it doesn't feel like that at all. But at the same time, I don't' feel intimidated by him. Then again it'd be problematic as well if I actually felt intimidated in our first meeting. I thought a knight commander would have a more solemn atmosphere, but I'm happy that's not that case.

And about Remiri-san, apparently she's a former royal court magician. But what's surprising is that she's actually the oldest in this room. She's a dark elf, and because she doesn't look like she's aged at all, I couldn't tell at all.

I don't know what her age is though, I couldn't ask. When I was wondering to myself whether to ask her or not, Shiva-san asked her with no hesitation, and Remiri-san just stared daggers at him with a frightening killing intent. So after that, I just decided not to speak a word about her age.

Incidentally, Remiri-san hates being addressed with the sama suffix, and Shiva-san said that since he's no longer a knight-commander he doesn't need the sama either. So with that it's been decided to just refer to them with a san.

I know that they met in this town to meet each other, but…

"Why did you decide to meet in this town?" [Ryouma]
"Since you're in training, I think you should know, but there's a nearby town here known as the Town of Departed Spirits" [Rheinbach]
"Do you know of the herb, Everlasting Darkness." [Remiri]
"It's an herbal ingredient that's mainly used for tranquilizers and sleeping potions. And depending on the amount and what it's mixed with, it can be turned into a poison that causes pain and confusion. As a result, it's an herb that's difficult to handle." [Ryouma]
"Oh, how knowledgeable. It's exactly as you said, but Eternal Darkness (herb) isn't only used in medicines." [Remiri]

As Remiri-san said that, she took out a black wand.

"This wand is something I was gifted when I became an adult. I've been taking good care of it all this time, but it's almost about to reach its limit." [Remiri]
"I see, so you want an Eternal Darkness (herb) in order to make a new wand." [Ryouma]
"Precisely." [Remiri]
"In my case, I had a lot of free time after retiring and after leaving the management of our territory to my son. So I thought it wouldn't be so bad to go along with Remiri from time to time. I didn't expect to meet you here though." [Rheinbach]
"For you to be training at such a young age… Do you have any goals?" [Shiva]

Since Shiva-san asked, I explained the matter about recovering my grandparents' inheritance.

"Hmm… within the forest of the Great Forest of Shurus, huh?" [Shiva]
"True… If you're going there, you'll definitely need some protection against the undead." [Remiri]
"I can use light magic, but since I haven't had any experience with undead yet, I thought of getting some experience at the Town of Departed Spirits." [Ryouma]
"Oh? You can use light magic?" [Shiva]
"Yes. I can use the elementary offense magic, 'Light Ball', and the anti-undead defensive magic, "Holy Curtain'. But only those two." [Ryouma]
"Considering your age, that's more than enough. Since you know those, I guess you're only worried about getting mobbed by undeads then. If you could at least use elementary light magic, you'd be set." [Shiva]
"Want me to teach you? Elementary light magic that is." [Remiri]
"Is it ok?" [Ryouma]
"Of course. You're a kid Rheinbach-chan's taken a liking to after all. And you even noticed me after I used 'Hide', so I think you're a really brilliant kid." [Remiri]

'Hide'? I've never heard of that magic before, but could it be a magic to conceal yourself? …She used it when we met?

"Is 'Hide' a magic?" [Ryouma]
"Yeah, but it's dark magic, so I suppose it's only natural that you don't know. It's an intermediate level that allows one to hid his presence." [Remiri]
"Remiri-sama is an expert of dark magic and light magic, an accomplished royal court magician. There are very few with abilities above her." [Sebasu]
"Save for her personality, there're no questions when it comes to her skill." [Rheinbach]
"How rude… My personality's perfectly fine." [Remiri]

Said Remiri-san as she threw a puzzled gaze toward Rheinbach-sama and Shiva-san. Sebasu-san on the other hand just stood at Rheinbach's side quietly as if saying, 'Nothing to do with me'. In any case, I'm happy to have someone teach me light magic, but I wonder if it'll turn out alright.

"Once you've met her, she'll bring you trouble whether she teaches you or not. So Ryouma-kun, I think it'd be a fine idea for you to just accept her offer." [Shiva]

What does that mean? Now I'm a little worried, but at the same time, I don't want to waste this opportunity.

"Thank you, I'm truly grateful to be able to learn light magic. Remiri-san, if you're alright with it, then please teach me light magic." [Ryouma]
"Then it's decided! It's only temporary, but I'll have you call me master during this time." [Remiri]
"Master? Alr–" [Ryouma]
"Oneechan would do just fine too." [Remiri]

Just when I was about to agree, she suddenly suggested something unexpected. But that was embarrassing so I refused.

"Let's go with 'master'." [Ryouma]
"Eh, but that will affect my motivation–" [Remiri]

Remiri-san was clearly not satisfied with my answer. When the other three heard that, they couldn't help but remark.

"Even though you're the one who wanted to be called master." [Shiva]
"It must be tiring to have Remiri as your teacher, but there's nothing else to it than to endure or let it pass. Do your best, Ryouma-kun." [Rheinbach]
"Ryouma-sama, there're no doubts about Remiri-sama's ability, so please don't worry." [Sebasu]

How to put it… Remiri-san feels like a very 'free' type of person.

As I was thinking that, Rheinbach-sama suggested one more thing.

"Oh, right. Ryouma-kun, it's been awhile, so how about you show us how you fight?" [Rheinbach]

I don't mind, but why all of the sudden?

"Then would it be fine if I accompanied you guys to the Town of Departed Spirits." [Ryouma]
"That's fine too, but I'd like you to spar once with Shiva over here." [Rheinbach]

Eh? Spar with a former knight commander? Wait, even Shiva-san's shocked!

Before I could ask why, Shiva-san asked. And apparently Rheinbach-sama wants to see my abilities, but if he were to spar with me himself, his evaluation of me might be a bit too biased. So he decided it'd be best if I sparred with Shiva-san who I'd just met for the first time. On top of that, since he's a former knight commander, he'd be able to give an accurate evaluation of my abilities.

This most likely isn't the first time Rheinbach-sama's thought of this though. As he seemed to have already been planning to test my abilities before my trip to the Great Forest of Shurus.

When I spoke with the members of the duke's household before via letter regarding the Great Forest of Shurus, they suggested in our conversation to just let them send some people to pick it up for me, but I wouldn't agree. So they told me to contact them first before going. I'm guessing they were planning to test my abilities then.

After hearing this reason, Shiva-san agreed to test my abilities. Then again, he was only a little surprised after being told to spar all of the sudden, it's not like he was planning to refuse in the first place.

After that, Shiva-san said that it'd be better for us to fight with no information on each other as that would reflect my actual abilities the best. Of course, preparing carefully beforehand is also good, but there're also times when one can get caught in a fight without being able to prepare. If one's abilities aren't up to par then, he wouldn't be able to survive. With that, it's been decided that we will be sparring before lunch.

As a result, I will be taken to the area where we will be sparring, just outside the town, by Sebasu-san's dimension magic. Shiva-san's just started to travel after all, so he's different from me, and doesn't have his weapons with him. Because of that it's been decided that I'll go ahead, and he'll come after grabbing his weapons.

First we teleported to the gate of Teressa. We could've teleported beyond just fine too, but, save for emergencies, it's illegal to go past the gate with dimension magic.

After going past the gate, we teleported again, and this time we reached a rocky area. With this, we won't have to worry about our surroundings.

Sebasu-san said that he'll bring Shiva-san and the others next, so I sent him off, and I began to do my own preparations. My opponent is a former knight commander. Obviously, he's going to be strong. Even if he has gotten older, his power should still be on a completely different level compared to those bandits I've been fighting. I can't let my guard down…

Chapter 24

After Sebasu took Ryouma to the appointed area, Rheinbach and the others talked about Ryouma. Before they could finish their discussion, Sebasu came back. When Shiva saw that, he quickly went to prepare.

Quickly entering his room, he gazed deeply at the halberd he was using during his service, and the armor he bought after retiring. Then he said to himself,

"How strong is that boy I wonder… Judging from his movements alone, I know that he's skilled, but as to what extent, I don't know. From what Rheinbach said, he's not an opponent I could take lightly… How despicable, truly. That my body would age so." [Shiva]

When he resigned, he could still fully fulfill his duties. But although people tried to stop him from resigning, he was resolute in his decision.

At the time, he had already begun to find his once favorite halberd that he swung with ease, gradually becoming heavier. It was only through arduous training in qigong that he eventually learned how to swing it as he did before. His worsening skill was the painful mark of age.

And in the end, he resigned as soon as he finished raising a successor.

After retiring, he did everything he could to keep himself from getting dull, and from getting older. He toiled against age, but no matter how hard he worked, he knew he couldn't overcome it. And he would spend the nights drinking away his feelings.

Remiri who was listening while lying down said,

"The flow of time is like that. Everyone's the same, you, me, there's nothing else to it but to accept it. But the more prepared you are for it, the more accepting you'll be. Shiva-chan, if you let your mind wander, you'll grow old quickly." [Remiri]

Said Remiri to Shiva. The sort of philosophy you'd expect from a race with long life like the dark elves.

Shiva smiled bitterly when he remembered those words.

"Seriously, Remiri… It's hard to tell your age with you being a dark elf, I wonder if you even actually age at all. I don't know exactly how old you are… But it's most likely close to double mine. Yet your body hasn't changed one bit since we first met. Your movements haven't slowed one bit either. Even if you tell me you're aging; I don't see it one bit.

Swallowing my pride, I once asked her if she had a secret. And she just replied, "Because my heart's young." What's that supposed to mean? No, even if I talk about this now, nothing will change. Right now, I should just focus on my spar with Ryouma." [Shiva]

He cast away all his worldly thoughts, steeled himself for the upcoming spar, and finished his preparations. Then together with Remiri and Rheinbach, they teleported with Sebasu-san's dimension magic, passed through the gate, and teleported a second time. The rocky place where the mock match would take place appeared, but for some reason, a part of the land has been levelled. And a great number of slimes were there, surrounding Ryouma. Shiva and the others then went to take a closer look.

"Thank you for this opportunity, Shiva-san." [Ryouma]
"Same, let's have a good spar. By the way, what's up with the ground and these slimes?" [Shiva]
"The slimes are my slave demons. And the ground, I levelled with my magic for our spar. I figured it'd be better to have an area that's closer to the ones in the training grounds." [Ryouma]
"Oh, thank you for that. Do you have enough magic power left?" [Shiva]
"Don't worry, the slimes were the one who used earth magic to level the ground." [Ryouma]
"I see. Then as for the rules of this spar, the rules of the knight ceremony should be fine, right?" [Shiva]
"How does that work?" [Ryouma]
"We'll each be fighting with real weapons in a one on one. And either side can use magic up to the intermediate level. In other words, it's a real fight. You can use even magic weapons if you want; I don't mind. It'd normally be dangerous without a healer, but fortunately, Remiri is here, so there's nothing to worry on that front." [Shiva]
"I can use healing magic all the way to the advanced level. Even if your limbs are cut off, as long as it's

immediately, I can put it back. So don't worry, alright?" [Remiri]

Ryouma was surprised when he heard that, but he quickly understood, and then asked a question regarding the rules.

"Regarding the weapons…" [Ryouma]

As Ryouma said that, he had the weapon he was using split into slimes, and then back in to a single blade again. Then he continued,

"The weapon I'm using is like this, so… Is this still within the rules of one on one?" [Ryouma]

Shiva thought a bit, then he said,

"It's my first time seeing someone use slimes as a weaopn, but… This is a match to see the extent of your abilities. If you're using that as a weapon, then there's no problem. But using the slimes themselves to attack is a breach of rules." [Shiva]
"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

With the rules decided, the two fighters gripped their weapons, and walked towards each other over the ring (levelled ground). In between the two of them was Sebasu-san, the referee. Then with Sebasu-san's 'Fight!' the match began.

"… Fight!" [Sebasu]
"Fu!!" [Shivas]

As the signal resounded, Shiva quickly thrusted his halberd to test Ryouma. But Ryouma dodged that, and he closed the distance between them. Shiva wasn't going to let him do that, so he lifted his halberd up, and attacked with its handle. But Ryouma dodged again, and this time, he fired a 'Fire Arrow' towards Shiva. Dodging that, the former knight commander, shot back with his own.

The battlefield quickly turned into an exchange of fire arrows and clanging metal, but the two fighters have yet to show their full might. They were still measuring each other up.

If the people fighting were anyone else, Sebasu and the others would have a hard time believing the fight before them to be a mere warm up.

Marks of the fighting could be seen in the ground around the two as fierce fighting continued at its center. The continuing sound of clanging metal and crashing magic showed just how fierce the battle was. Not one bit of the fight resembled a mere warm up.

In truth, the two were already fighting at a pace such that normal soldiers or adventurers would have a hard time seeing their crossing swords. The only ones who would think those shooting arrows of magic and thrusting halberd to be nothing but a warmup, were Shiva and Ryouma. If it was a normal soldier, he would have been pierced without even having the time to react. A normal soldier wouldn't be able to dodge and fight back. And likewise, a normal soldier wouldn't be able to stop Ryouma's counterattacks either. Such a thing is impossible for them. Shiva and Ryouma fought at a level so high, normal soldiers wouldn't be able to do anything but watch and wait.

As that sort of battle continued, Shiva made his move.

Raising his halberd, he swung down towards Ryouma's shoulder, and released magic power at the same time. Ryouma quickly reacted, and took a step back. But having sensed the flow of magic, he immediately jumped to the right.

In the next instant, whirlwind blew from the halberd, showering the area Ryouma was standing at a while ago with countless attacks.

Shiva's halberd is a magic weapon imbued with the powers of the elementary wind magic 'Wind Cutter' and the intermediate wind magic 'Tornado Cutter'. Activating 'Tornado Cutter' summons a small vortex of wind blades, cutting the foe into bits. Of course, Shiva held back in that attack just now, so Ryouma wouldn't have died. But if he hadn't dodged there, he would have incurred enough damage to be rendered incapable of fighting.

"You noticed." [Shiva]

"If I hadn't sensed the magic power flowing into your weapon, this spar would have ended right then and there." [Ryouma]

The ability to detect magic power. The decision that the magic power being released was to activate a magic weapon. And the decision to dodge. If Ryouma could not do even a single one of those, or if Ryouma was even a moment slower in making a decision, it would have been too late, and he would not have been able to dodge.

But Ryouma spectacularly dodged unwounded. And Shiva could not help but praise Ryouma in his heart. At the same time however, he focused even harder.

And the battle began once more.

But this time, the both of them were going at it for real. And this time, Ryouma made his move.

" 'Fire Arrow' " [Ryouma]

Ryouma casted his magic, and slashed with his blade. It's the usual pattern, but right before Ryouma attacked with his blade, he casted another magic. A chantless 'Earth Needle'.

"Tch!" [Shiva]

Shiva managed to dodge the chantless 'Earth Needle' that fired off from Ryouma's feet, but that sudden attacked opened a hole in Shiva's defense. In an instant, the distance between them was shortened, and Shiva was forced to receive Ryouma's blade with the handle of his halberd clad in ki.

Immediately, Shiva began to fire off consecutive 'Fire Ball' at Ryouma, stopping him and letting Shiva take some distance. Then he fired off a 'Wind Cutter' from his own halberd.

As he did so, a question popped up.

(That's weird… This boy is blocking my attacks, but he refuses to attack immediately after. …No, that's wrong. He is attacking, but there's some strain in his movements. His swordsmanship is certainly exceptional, and he can even use 'Chantless Casting'. But… Compared to his skills, there is a strange hole in his fighting… I guess you could say there's some clumsiness in his movements.

At first, I thought that he was feigning weakness on purpose, baiting me to attack, but… It's too blunt. Could this boy possibly…)

As the two fighters continued to exchange blows, Shiva thought of testing his theory. And with a thrust, Shiva's hypothesis was proven true.

(This boy most likely trained in swordsmanship and magic, and then combined those two by himself… He's skilled with his sword, so I thought he wouldn't have much openings, but looks like he's still lacking in experience. That might be enough for your age, but it doesn't change the fact that you there's an opening!)

From here on out, Ryouma started to lose out.

If it was only with their martial arts, then it would have been a struggle for supremacy. But there's another factor in this battle, and that's magic.

Ryouma came up with his own methods, but his opponent, Shiva, is someone originally from this world. Even if both of them can use magic from the start, because of Shiva's training as a knight, his skill was more polished, and he is able to cast magic right after attacking with his halberd. He can even cover for his openings with magic after making a bold move. Shiva's movements were just much smoother than Ryouma's.

Until now, it didn't matter whether Ryouma's movements were clumsy or not because of the absurd difference between his own abilities and his opponents'. But Shiva is someone with abilities that could rival Ryouma's. An opponent like that wouldn't fail to make use of an opening. And that small opening is the reason why the battle has turned to Shiva's favor.

The battle continued like that with Ryouma losing out for a while. Then Ryouma suddenly clad his own body with ki, and he moved at a level faster than before.

Dodging Shiva's magic, Ryouma went for Shiva's chest. Shiva dodged that attack, and counterattacked. But now the small advantage he had was gone.

When Ryouma began to lose, he realized that he was losing out in magic, and at the same time he realized that he had forgotten his own specialty.

It's common sense in this world to use magic to fight against magic, but there's no magic in Earth.

So Ryouma decided to stop thinking of forcibly combining magic with the Kenjutsu he learned from earth. To begin with, that forced combination could be said to be nothing but a crude attempt, so it can't be helped if it there are a few holes in it.

But then following that thought, as long as he doesn't use that forced combination, he should be able to solve the problem. And so he instead devoted everything into the Kenjutsu that he has been practicing for a long time.

As Ryouma came to understand that, the battle became even fiercer.

Shiva swung his halberd from the upper left to the lower right, aiming for Ryouma's head.

Even if Ryouma blocked the oncoming halberd with his sword, he would still get hit with his own blade from the impact, so he aimed for the blade instead. Ryouma took a waki-gamae stance with his blade on the right, then he moved his right foot diagonally forward, taking a half step. Then sinking his body, he swung his blade in a circle, parrying the attack of the halberd. And then immediately after, he instantly took a large step with his left leg, closing the distance as he went to cut Shiva's left leg.

Shiva twisted his body back to dodge the blade, and aimed his halberd towards Ryouma's leg to stop him. As Ryouma dodged that, Shiva casted 'Wind Cutter'. And then having calculated where Ryouma would run to, he activated his magic weapon's 'Tornado Cutter'.

The flurry of spells bore through the earth, and a cloud of dust blew as the force of the wind carried dusts and stones with it. But Ryouma's heightened speed from his ki allowed him to dodge. Then he swept the clouds of dust away, and he rushed towards Shiva again.

The two exchanged blows like that, pushing their own techniques to the limits. In the midst of that fierce battle with little room for wandering thoughts, Shiva finally remembered that sense of fulfillment that he once had.

The power he believed he had lost had returned. The abilities he thought to have dulled were sharpened to the point of comfort. Shiva swung his halberd freely, and fired magic continuously.

But such a battle wouldn't last forever. In the midst of that fierce fighting, the two fighters suddenly took a step away from each other. As they each calmed their heavy breathing, they glared at each other with great pressure.

They did not arrange this. They did not plan for this. But they thought of the same thing. The next move would be the last.

"HA!" [Ryouma & Shiva]

At the height of tension, the shriek of fighting spirit echoed, and the curtain was drawn on the last exchange.

Ryouma pointed the tip of his sword to Shiva, and wielded it tightly. Then focusing all of the ki within his body to his legs, he rocketed off in an explosive speed that made the once visible distance between the two appear as nothing more than an illusion.

Shiva filled his halberd with magic power to meet Ryouma's abnormal speed. Then he chantlessly casted 'Tornado Cutter'. With Shiva using the same magic as his magic weapon, the resulting force doubled. As his halberd struck out, the combined force of the two whirlwinds exploded.

Ryouma dodged the halberd, but the whirlwind of wind blades cut his cheek, his shoulders, and even the left half of his body, leaving cuts and bleeding wounds. But Ryouma ignored the damage, and stepped in even further. He took back the ki he had allocated to his lower body, transferring it to the entirety of his body. And then with all of his strength, he thrusted his sword.

Shiva tried to twist his body as hard as he could to dodge that thrust that could kill him instantly, but the blade still reached his left flank, and a shallow, bleeding wound was cut.

Because of the force from the thrust, Ryouma's body kept going. But strengthening his legs with his ki, he stepped hard into the ground, forcefully stopped his body, and turned. Then he raised his sword high, reaching to his back. And using the load in his legs and knees like a spring, he jumped as if he were bouncing towards Shiva, and slashed.

At the same moment, Shiva brought back his halberd, and met Ryouma's attack.

In the next instant, blood sprayed into the air.

Chapter 25

"That's enough!!" [Sebasu]

As blood spurted into the air, the butler whose uniform had been dirtied from the clouds of dust, called the fight.

"Looks like… I lost…" [Shiva]
"…Ah? Wasn't it my? –Ow…" [Ryouma]

The two fighters whispered that as they grimaced in pain.

Wounded and bleeding, the two were only enduring.

The armor covering Shiva's left shoulder was cut, bleeding. His neck's scruff, pierced by the tip of Ryouma's blade. On the other side, Ryouma's shoulder was pierced from above by the blade of the halberd with a shortened handle that Shiva was using. And his abdomen was suffering from a large wound incurred from the 'Wind Cutter' spell that Shiva fired off.

The 'Wind Cutter' spell is an elementary wind magic, and is often considered to be the first step in one's study of the element. Because of this its consumption of magic power is low, and its power is also proportionally weak. But in Shiva's case, he trained this elementary spell, and although he can't fire it consecutively, he became able to cast it chantlessly while possessing great power. On top of that, he could shoot it from a number of angles, turning it into a quick and powerful shot.

Although simple, the 'Wind Cutter' spell is effective in any situation. Combine that with Shiva's ability and experience, it's a frightening weapon. All the more so for humans that don't have a natural armor like carapace, scale, or flesh like some magical beasts.

It was by that magic that Ryouma was hit in his armor's seam. The attack didn't cause an instant death, but if left alone, Ryouma could bleed to death. In fact, if it weren't for Ryouma's physical pain resistance skill Lv 8, he'd be writhing in pain at this very moment.

"I thought I had stopped him with my spear, but to think he would actually retaliate like that…" [Shiva]

Their attacks came mostly at the same time, but Ryouma's was slightly faster. And the moment Ryouma's attack sliced Shiva's armor apart, wounding him. Shiva's halberd pierced Ryouma's right shoulder that was thrusted towards him from the last attack, and in the next instance, he fired off his 'Wind Cutter'.

Shiva thought Ryouma's sword had finally come to a halt there, but then Ryouma pulled out his sword from Shiva's shoulder and armor. Because he was unable to move his right hand because of the halberd, he let go of his sword. And as a last resort, he focused his ki into his left arm, and thrusted into the scruff of Shiva's neck.

Then Sebasu who was acting as the referee said,

"If Ryouma-sama had fully swung his sword, then that attack would have definitely lopped Shiva-sama's head off. At the same time, Ryouma-sama would have also suffered a life-threatening wound. So as the referee, I decided to put a stop to the match here. Now please sheathe your weapons, and quickly get yourselves healed. Especially you, Ryouma-sama." [Sebasu]

At Sebasu's calm declaration, the two warriors sheathed their weapons. Immediately after, Shiva fell to the ground into a sitting position, while Ryouma fell down. And as Sebasu-san held Ryouma up, and gently made him lie down on the ground, more blood flowed out of Ryouma's wounds.

"Remiri-Sama!" [Sebasu]
"Yeah, yeah, I'm healing him! 'Mega Heal'! Sheesh, what kind of match was that supposed to be anyway?" [Remiri]
"One mistake, and either of you could've died." [Rheinbach]
"My apologies, as a referee–" [Sebasu]

Sebasu tried to apologize, but Rheinbach stopped him.

Although Sebasu-san was the referee, and although he should 've stopped the match earlier. The battle was just too fierce right from the start, and he couldn't enter the fray. Nevertheless, he did his best as the referee, went as close as he could, and tried to see the fierce fighting to the end while not getting in the two fighters' way. His dirtied clothes were proof of that.

Because of that Rheinbach stopped Sebasu from apologizing, and while Remiri healed the two fighters, he said,

"Sebasu, you're not at fault. I couldn't get in between these two either." [Rheinbach]
" 'Mega Heal' 'Mega heal' Exactly, so don't beat yourself up over it, Sebasu-chan. 'Mega Heal' After all, even I couldn't keep up with their movements at the end." [Remiri]

Said Remiri as she healed the two warrior's wounds with advanced healing magic that made it look like she was turning back time, leaving not even a scar to be seen. As a result, Ryouma was too shocked at the efficacy of advanced healing magic to hear what the adults were saying.

"Sorry, but he wasn't an opponent I could hold back against. In order to measure him up properly, I needed to go at full strength." [Shiva]
"I know that but…" [Remiri]
"Well they're both fine in the end, so isn't it fine? Neither lost their life, and neither got any scars." [Rheinbach]

Then Rheinbach asked,

"With this he should be more than good enough to enter the Great Forest of Shurus. And I don't have any complaints either, so I suppose we can send him off without worrying, right, Sebasu?" [Rheinbach]
"Yes. With that much ability, he should be fine even without any escorts." [Sebasu]
"Right. Although for him to actually manage to force Shiva to go at full strength, and come out on equal footing… the power of the godchilds are truly frightening." [Rheinbach]

Just as Ryouma finished checking his wounds, he was finally able to shake himself from his amazement, and the word 'godchild' entered his ears, causing him to tilt his head. Judging from the context, he knew that they're talking about him, but he's never heard of the word 'godchild' before.

"Godchild? What is that?" [Ryouma]
"Oh, you didn't know? Well, I guess it's not that common of a word… Godchilds are people who appear once every several hundred years, possessing power, abilities, and knowledge that far surpasses other people." [Rheinbach]

That 'godchild' Rheinbach was talking about, that comes once every several years, are most likely earthlings just like himself, thought Ryouma. At the same time, Ryouma started to wonder whether they knew that he was an otherworlder, but after hearing from Rheinbach, he finally understood the situation.

The otherworlders who come into this world all leave behind some sort of mark in history. And there are even some who inherit the ideas of those otherworlders. Amongst the otherworlders are people who inherit important positions, people who discover a number of things, saving lives until today. And even those who claimed to others that they were called here to this world by the gods.

The people of this world couldn't ascertain the authenticity of having been called here by the gods. But there was no denying that these people did exist, and they possessed knowledge and abilities that transcended others'. So the people of this world honored them, and were grateful. And with fear, they came to call these people that possessed transcendent knowledge and abilities as 'godchild' or 'the apostles of god'.

"So I'm the same as those so-called 'godchilds'" [Ryouma]
"Well yes, there shouldn't be any mistake. Actually, on top of Shiva's level 7 halberd arts and his position as a former knight commander, he is also the nations' strongest knight. For a 12-year-old child such as yourself to fight him on equal footing, that is something that far surpasses the territory of 'genius'. On top of that, you even have talent in various magic and knowledge in various areas. So just thinking about it a little, it's not really a hard conclusion to arrive to." [Rheinbach]

Said Rheinbach with a bright smile, to which Ryouma then asked with conviction,

"Not hard, then… Could it be that you knew from the start?" [Ryouma]
"Ever since you stayed with us at the Town of Gimuru actually. I told you before, right? You are too skilled, so you should be careful of bad people, or something, right? And besides, godchilds all possess high skill levels and special skills since a young age. And they all also appear as orphans or people with no relatives." [Rheinbach]

He noticed that quickly, thought Ryouma to himself, shocked. But that was almost right after we had just met when we went to the church to get my status board made.

As Ryouma was thinking to himself, Sebasu said in a calming voice.

"Please don't be concerned. Regardless of whether Ryouma-sama is a godchild or not, we will neither put you in harm's way, nor try to bind you." [Sebasu]
"Our relationship won't change. All the more so if you truly are a child of god." [Rheinbach]

Ryouma trusted the Jamil Household, so he wasn't worried about being treated badly by them in particular. But he was curious when he heard Sebasu mention something about being 'bound', so he asked about it. The one who answered however, was neither Rheinbach nor Sebasu, but Remiri.

"The godchilds all possess great talent and great power, so getting them as one's subordinates would reap great profits. But you know, it's also because they possess great power that should they be offended, they could cause great damage. Such calamities have occurred many times in the past.

That's why all the nobles in the country have wordlessly agreed to honor the will of the godchilds. How each one honors or dishonors this tacit agreement is up to each individual, but should they anger a godchild, the nobles will ostracize them, seize their properties, and/or even execute them." [Remiri]

Ryouma's eyes opened wide in shock.

"No way… why would a country do so much for an individual…" [Ryouma]
"It's not an exaggeration at all." [Remiri]

Remiri then brought up a previous case.

Once upon a time in this country, the Rifo-ru Kingdom, appeared a child of god. That godchild was a man who rode upon an iron horse that knew no rest, and would ride across the country at a frightening speed. Moreover, being skilled in dimension magic, he would carry with him a great number of commodities as he travelled around the country.

That man's abilities caught the eye of the king. And so the king ordered him to enter the army. But the man wished for freedom, and he obstinately refused the king's orders time and time again. He was the sort of man that would absolutely never yield, so in the end, the king decided to threaten to take away his freedom, forcibly binding him as his servant. But the man rebelled, and he mowed down all those who tried to catch him. Riding on his iron horse, no one could catch him.

After that, the man would raid the residences and carriages of the nobles, pillaging their money and their goods. And no matter how many tried to catch him, not one man could catch his iron horse. Gradually, the man gained comrades, and he became a problem that even the country's army couldn't handle.

With his new comrades, his larceny reached a new height, and he stretched his hands even on the nobles of the other countries. It was a disaster. On top of that, when the man would run away, he would announce that he came from Rifo-ru, and that the king of Rifo-ru tried to take his job and freedom away, so he's doing these things as a form of protest.

Gradually, criticism towards the country that caused the disaster began to propagate both in the country and outside. Soon a conspiracy theory about how the thieves were actually a special force disguised as a thief, sent by the country to pillage other countries' treasure.

As a result, the relationship with the other countries worsened, and the power of the king fell. In the end, his younger brother stole his position, and as punishment, the king was executed.

"The other countries calmed down a bit after the execution of the former king that was the cause of the disaster, but the relationship was still strained. It would have been fine if the godchild was also arrested, but in the end no one could catch him, and the stolen treasures were never recovered." [Remiri]

Hearing that, Ryouma remembered what the magic God, Fer Noevir, had told him, and he understood.

Ryouma never had any intentions of committing any atrocities with his powers, but ever since hearing about how the otherworlders abused theirs, he's been making sure to keep his abilities in check. But that was only something personal. Ryouma never had any perspective as the assailant or as the victim.

A victim would obviously try to prevent a disaster from happening. Especially, if there's a high chance of it occurring.

"I see…" [Ryouma]

As Ryouma mumbled that, Shiva, who's been quiet until now, asked,

"Since you understand, I'd like to ask, now that you know the truth, what are you going to do?" [Shiva]
"Even if you ask me that… I'll still continue my training all the same, get my grandparents' inheritance, and continue my life as a researcher and as an adventurer. I don't really have anything I want aside from living a leisurely life." [Ryouma]

Shiva heaved a sigh of relief at Ryouma's response, and said,

"Exactly as Rheinbach had said, huh?" [Shiva]
"Eh?" [Ryouma]

Ryouma alternately looked between Shiva and Rheinbach, then Shiva explained.

Actually, when Ryouma left the inn, Rheinbach talked about the possibility of Ryouma being a godchild and his personality. There he mentioned that Ryouma was an unselfish person with no interest in money or honor, and would rather spend his days fixating over his hobbies without living in luxury.

And while that wasn't exactly correct, it wasn't wrong either.

While Ryouma was working hard back in Earth, there were also times when he thought to live a more comfortable life. But of course, that doesn't mean to say that he wanted to live luxuriously.

Cheap, delicious food was more than enough. Clothes that wouldn't get him laughed at was sufficient. And a warm, strong house that wouldn't break during storms, and stay warm even during the winter was all that he wanted.

Ryouma isn't completely free of desires, but he is more than content just having the necessities of life.

On top of that, this world could be said to be the embodiment of Ryouma's hobbies. That's why Ryouma is more than satisfied just living his life here normally, working as an adventurer. As a result, he really doesn't really have much more he could ask for.

He's also not the type to show off his abilities ostentatiously, and neither is he the type for needless violence. Although he might not seem to act as young as his 12-year-old self would suggest, he's definitely a good boy.

That along with Ryouma's response just now and the air about him showed how little intention he had of harming the kingdom, bringing Shiva great relief.

"Don't worry, it's nothing." [Shiva]
"I see." [Ryouma]

Ryouma didn't pursue the meaning behind those words any further. Shiva was the former knight commander so he figured it wouldn't be strange at all for him to be thinking about something. What's important is that he seemed to be relieved, thought Ryouma to himself.

After that, the atmosphere became silent for a bit. The one to break that silence was Remiri.

"Hey~ Ryouma-chan." [Remir]
"What is it?" [Ryouma]
"If you don't mind, could you show us your status board?" [Remiri]
"My status board?" [Ryouma]
"Yep, your status board. We think you're a godchild, but if you could show us your status board, we could find out if you really are one or not." [Remiri]

Ryouma was surprised again when he heard those words. Ryouma's only heard about the term 'godchild' today, so of course he didn't know that you could find something like that out just from looking at the status board.

Ryouma wondered whether he should show his status board or not, but thinking to himself, "What's the point in hiding it after everything?" He showed his status board.

"There's a column for titles in the status board, right? Is there a "Favorite Child of the Gods" title there?" [Remiri]

"…Ah, there is." [Ryouma]

Looking at his status board, Ryouma saw that there was in fact such a title. So he made the column of titles visible for others to see, and he handed the status board to Remiri.

"He really is a child of god, huh? Even though I'm a dark elf, I never really thought I'd get a chance to meet one." [Remiri]
"Same. Magic aside, I don't think I could get him to go all out in martial arts." [Rheinbach]
"So you left it to Shiva-chan?" [Remiri]
"Yes. Although I think today's meeting was actually by the gods' wills. I've always been planning of having Ryouma meet Shiva to measure his abilities, but I didn't think we'd end up meeting today. Remiri, if you hadn't seen Ryouma staring at the carriage we were riding on… No, if we had gone here either by my slave demons or by Sebasu's dimension magic, then we probably wouldn't have met Ryouma, right?" [Rheinbach]
"Yeah, that's true. If Remiri hadn't suggested to travel via carriage since we hadn't met in such a long time, then we would have already gotten an Eternal Darkness (herb) and be on the way home now." [Shiva]

As Shiva agreed with Rheinbach, he looked at Ryouma's status board. Then suddenly, his eyes opened wide.

"Ryouma-kun, this title is…?" [Shiva]

As Shiva said that, he pointed towards the two titles beneath the title, "Favorite Child of the Gods," toward the "Disciple of the Sage" and the "Disciple of the Martial God". Ryouma replied,

"Ah, those are my grandparents who raised me. They are the ones who trained me in the foundations of magic and martial arts." [Ryouma]

It was Ryouma's prepared reply.

Silence flowed for a few minutes, then they asked for the names and race of Ryouma's grandparents. Immediately, the four adults were shocked, and they finally understood why Ryouma was so strong.

"Unbelievable, to think that Ryouma would actually be the disciple of the martial god and the sage…" [Rheinbach]
"In all these years I've lived as a dark elf, this must be the most surprising thing I've ever heard." [Remiri]
"So a godchild could show that much power after receiving guidance from those two." [Shiva]

When Ryouma heard Shiva's words, he couldn't help but ask,

"Shiva-san, do you know my grandparents? You said 'those two' just now, right?" [Ryouma]

Shiva vaguely nodded, and then said,

"I only really got to exchange some words with them a few times. When we were still mere soldiers, they were invited by the country, but they refused that invitation and in exchange they taught martial arts and magic to select individuals for some time." [Shiva]
"Of course one of those soldiers that were selected was me. Moreover, being just mere soldiers at the time, they weren't someone we could freely call out to." [Rheinbach]

After that, they decided to continue their conversation while eating, so they went back to town.

While eating, Shiva and Rheinbach spoke heartily. After that, Ryouma asked for advice in combining his magic with his sword, and he was told that he should at least find a way to cast his magic faster.

The group then discussed their plans the next day. Starting tomorrow, Ryouma will be learning from Remiri, and will be undergoing magic training while they search around the Town of Departed Spirits.

After their discussions ended, they went on their own ways, and Ryouma rested in a room that was prepared for him. There he was visited by Rheinbach and Sebasu.

"Ryouma-kun, do you have some time?" [Rheinbach]
"Yes, please enter." [Ryouma]

Ryouma welcomed them. And when Rheinbach entered the room he said this,

"Actually, I wanted to thank you. Thank you for having a match with Shiva. There hasn't been anyone whom he could fight with in these past few years equally, and on top of being made to do a lot of paperwork during his time as a knight commander, he became anxious over his age.

But thanks to you today, he was able to go all out, and has been feeling better since. And now it looks like that dominating spirit he once had is back. He's tired, so he's sleeping now, but it's really been a long time since I saw him make such a satisfied face." [Rheinbach]
"I'm happy I could help. I've also come to understand the places I'm lacking, so I'm also grateful to Shiva-san." [Ryouma]
"I see. I'm glad to hear that it was mutual." [Rheinbach]

Rheinbach laughed as he said that, then taking Sebasu with him, he left the room after telling Ryouma to enjoy himself, but to make sure to get some good night's rest as they'll be leaving early tomorrow.

After sending them off, Ryouma meditated until supper time, played with the slimes, and then he slept right after supper.

That strength can also be translated as HP. The same goes for magic power in that it can be translated as MP. But I didn't translate them like that, because the author never referred to them like we would normally refer to HP and MP. Also the magical strength in the prologue is just magical power.

For example: this character does X damage, and this one only has X HP, so he'll probably die if he doesn't dodge the attack.
Anyway, after checking the internet for a bit, I found out that the way to interpret HP in these settings is to treat the HP like this:

A character with high HP would receive an otherwise fatal attack, and live by barely dodging it.

But a character with low HP would just take it and die.

In other words it's just a rough indicator of how long a character might last in a fight, nothing specific. Magic power on the otherhand is now clearly being treated as MP. But we've been going at it as magic power all this time, so let's just keep that. And as for strength, I'll just translate that as health, so it pairs up nicely with magic power.

In any case, apologies for the confusion, I'm reading along with you guys, so there are times when I don't really know what the author is intending, and I term things wrong.

Also, regarding maze and labyrinth. The town of departed spirits is a labyrinth, and the maze referred to in this chapter is definitely a maze. At least according to the words used in the RAW anyway.

TLDR: In status: Strength -> Health; Magical Strength = Magic Power;

Town of Departed Spirits is a labyrinth; the maze referred to in this story is a maze.

The next day.

I woke up early, and left the town with the others, passing through a canyon known as Troll Canyon.

The Troll Canyon is a large canyon located west of the country. It's a maze that has naturally formed after many years.

The roads narrowed as we entered the canyon, and tall cliffs could be seen at every direction.

As this canyon is at the border of the country, there is a fortress watching over the border west of Teressa at this canyon. The Town of Departed Spirits that we will be going to however, is located north-west.

It's about a 2-day walk from Teressa. We can't ride on horse to go there because of all the cliffs, so we'll have to go on foot with a rope in hand.

I have to say though; this is quite a valley. I just can't help but look around at everything.
Then having noticed me, Remiri-san asked,

"Is it your first time seeing this kind of scenery?" [Remiri]
"Yes. It's amazing. I wonder how much time it actually took for such a place to form naturally." [Ryouma]
"This one took around 1,500 years." [Remiri]
"Eh?"

1500 years? Only?

"Can something like this be made in such a short period?" [Ryouma]
"True, it's definitely a short time to create a valley. But that only holds true for natural valleys." [Remiri]

This isn't natural?

"Was this valley made by humans?" [Ryouma]

Remiri-san looked a bit worried for a moment, then she said,

"Mn…… Well it's definitely influenced by man. But it's also wrong to say that it was intentionally made by man. Actually, this place used to be the training grounds of a godchild. And because of the influence of his magic, the ground changed." [Remiri]

Interjecting, Sebasu-san continued,

"Our country was at war when this canyon was created. Just as the country was about to be destroyed, a child of god, carrying great magical power appeared. Records speak of his absurd and powerful magic.

At the godchild's training, mountains would be born, the earth would be split, broken, and washed away in heavy rain and waves. Because of that, this canyon and the surrounding mountain district were born." [Sebasu]

Haa!? An otherworlder created a canyon with his magic!? No way… Ah, wait… This might be that peerless magician that Gayn and the others were talking about. He was also supposedly around during wartime too…

How crazy was his magic though, I wonder.

"Can you do it too?" [Remiri]
"No way!" [Ryouma]

No way I could! Don't put me together with that guy! Wait, actually, since there was a guy who could do something like that, I guess it's only a given that they would be cautious with other godchilds… If anything, I suppose I should consider myself lucky for not being persecuted.

As I thought that to myself, I felt like I remembered something. But right before I could remember that something fully, a magical beast attacked us, so I focused on that instead.

The beast that attacked was a harris crow, a bird-type magical beast. There were 20 of them. It's an E Rank magical beast, so they're not that strong. But with the place being so narrow, it'd be better to attack them with magic instead of weapons. But just as I was thinking to do just that, Shiva-san had already gone ahead to use a weak tornado with little killing power to drive them away.

"That sort of weak opponent; you can just scare them away with a little bit of power. There's no reason to actually waste magic power fighting them." [Shiva]
"I see, thank you very much." [Ryouma]
"Don't mind it. Something like this, I can do as many times as needed. After all, you made me realize that I'm still more than capable! Ha Ha Ha!" [Shiva]

… Somehow, Shiva-san's a bit different compared to yesterday. Rather than cheerful, I guess you could say he's more lively now.

We walked through the canyon with Shiva-san in the lead. From time to time, we would cross rivers, climb cliffs, fight magical beasts. It was in this way that we proceeded until the sun began to set. We looked for a place that was a road's width wide, big enough for us to make camp. There we decided to rest.

Being at the bottom of the valley, there was little moonlight, and as soon as the sun had fully set, the whole area was submerged in darkness.

Remiri-san then began to use magic.

"Ryouma-kun, this is a good opportunity, so I'll teach you a light attribute magic now." [Remiri]
"Thank you very much, please do, master." [Ryouma]
"… You don't feel like calling me oneechan?" [Remiri]
"Please teach me, master." [Ryouma]

I called her master a second time, and Remiri-san made a sulking face.

"Fine. Until you decide to call me oneechan, I'll be strict on you! I'm not going to hold back at all because I'm not as nice as Elize-chan." [Remiri]
"Yes! By the way, why did you suddenly mention the madam's name?" [Ryouma]
"Oh, didn't I mention it? I used to be Elize-chan's teacher on magic." [Remiri]
"Really? I didn't know." [Ryouma]
"That's right. And not just magic, I thought her all sorts of things too. Because of that, I've actually also met with her daughter many times, but Elize-chan has a bad tendency of being overprotective." [Remiri]

Ahh… I can somewhat understand.

"Anyway, let's start. First, I'll show you how to do it, so pay attention. 'Holy Space'" [Remiri]

Remiri-san released light and magic power as she chanted that. Using not only my senses, but also using my magic detection, I saw a cube of magic power appear with Remiri-san at its center. Its center was teeming with magic power. It was somewhat similar to barrier magic.

"This is an intermediate magic of the light attribute, 'Holy Space'. With this magic, you can temporarily create an area where weak undead, like the zombies or the skeletons, won't be able to enter.

The duration and the size of the barrier depends on your ability. Also, stronger undead will be able to enter the area affected by 'Holy Space' by force, so be careful. Now, how about you try it yourself. Creating a small space that's at least big enough for one person to sleep in will be good enough for your first try." [Remiri]

Just as Remiri-san said, I gave it a shot. Using light attribute magic power, with the same concept as that of barrier magic, I designated the area. And as I filled the designated area with light attribute magic power, I visualized the image and chanted the magic words.

"'Holy Space'" [Ryouma]

I invocated the magic according to the image in my mind, but it's a lot more difficult to control compared to barrier magic. How to put it… A normal barrier magic is like a wall, with the magic power as water inside it, but this one is closer to that of a cloth. Water can't pass through the wall, so it just stays inside, but with a cloth, the water seeps out. If I let my concentration up for even a moment, the magic power within the designated area spills.

Well, in any case, I seem to have successfully casted the magic, so I asked Remiri-san to confirm that, saying,

"Remiri-san, how is it?" [Ryouma]

To which Remiri-san replied with a hint of disappointment somewhere in her voice.

"It's a success. You succeeded at your first try. Congratulations in succeeding at learning 'Holy Spell'…… Even though it was supposed to be the hardest magic amongst the intermediate class spells to control." [Remiri]

You know I can hear what you're mumbling there at the end of your sentence, right!? Asking for something so unreasonable, did you really want to be called oneechan that much?

I thought that to myself as I looked at Remiri-san. Then noticing my gaze, Remiri-san brought up a new topic.

"Ah, umm… Well for the meantime, since you succeeded with 'Holy Space', let's try to perfect it this time around." [Remiri]

If there's a place that can be improve, then lets.

"Please take care of me." [Ryouma]
"Before that, can you show me your status board?" [Remiri]

Status board? What for?

Anyway, I brought it out just as she told me too. And then she told me that she wanted to see how much magic power I'm using by looking at the value of my magic power before using and after using the magic.

Incidentally, elementary magic costs around 50 to 999 magic power, intermediate magic from 1000 to 4999, and advanced magic from 5,000 up.

'Holy Space' being an intermediate magic, consumes somewhere around 4,000 to 4,900 points of magic power. But my previous successful cast of 'Holy Space' apparently consumed too much power. When I went to check how much magic power I used after casting 'Holy Space' again, I found out that I had used over 10,000 points of magic power.

The more the magic power, the longer the duration, but the 4,000 to 4,900 points of magic power are already supposedly more than enough to last a night. So naturally, using enough magic power to last several days for a place you won't be staying in for more than a night is a waste, right? Or so said Remiri. It makes perfect sense though.

Incidentally, a similar method is being used at the imperial capital's academy that Elia is studying at, but the standards are far lower. For example, if casting a fire ball would normally be considered efficient at 100 points of magic power per volley, and thus be considered a pass. In order to allow the nobles to have good grades, the school would let them pass even at a consumption rate of 500 points of magic power per volley.

With that kind of standard, the students use enough power to cast five volleys, but can't even cast more than one volley. Something like that might not matter at the academy, but if they do something like that out in the real world, they'll run out of magic power quickly. Which then effectively makes their magic useless. So Remiri-san says that in order for me not to suffer a similar fate, I need to train properly.

After that I practiced 'Holy Space' for a bit, adjusting it repeatedly. And eventually I managed to keep the duration up while keeping its consumption to only 4,900 points of magic power.

Actually, I could lower the magic power even back when I first used it, but this magic takes a bit of skill. That so-called skill is the distribution of magic power. Without that, this magic won't work.

When activating 'Holy Space', one needs to fill the designated space with magic power, while controlling that magic power with another force of magic power. If the magic power that controls the magic filling the space is too weak, then the magic power will leak out, causing the effect of the spell to weaken, fail, or consume more magic power.

After practicing the spell for a bit, I started to change the image in my mind from that of barrier magic to that of a balloon. After which, it became much easier to cast.

It's thanks to my huge reservoir of magic power that I was able to train up to this point. After all, I was already close to my limits by the time I managed to properly keep my magic consumption in check. If it was a normal magician, it would've taken him at least several days.

According to Remiri-san, it's possible to become so efficient at one's control of magic, such that one would be able to cast magic with the same effect but at a lower cost. Right, I should continue to practice even more.

By the time I finished training, we were able to have our supper immediately because Sebasu-san made supper early.

After we finished eating, they talked about the godchild who created this canyon. They noticed how interested I was this morning, so since there was time to spare, they decided to talk about it.

Come to think of it, didn't I remember something around that time? What was it again?
Ah, well… whatever. Let's just hear their story first.

"Hmm… where should I start… The name of the godchild who created this canyon is Masaharu. That name has now become rather famous because of his tyranny though." [Rheinbach]
"Tyranny?" [Ryouma]

At that question, Shiva-san answered.

"Yes, tyranny. You know that he appeared when the country was in dire straits, right?" [Shiva]
"Yes, I've heard of it." [Ryouma]
"At that time, the king was desperate to break through that situation, so he wished to gain the power of that godchild at all costs. So much so that he ceased to care about appearances.

So the king spread a lie that the godchild was his illegitimate child, gave him a cordial welcome, and then bound him to the country as part of his war chest." [Shiva]

So that otherworlder, Masaharu, became royalty, huh?

"There were three children before the king, so it was believed that there would be little chance of Masaharu becoming the king. But then one of them was betrayed by his allies, while another went out to war to encourage the soldiers, only for himself to die. And the last one was killed by an assassin from an opposing country. Then the king himself after winning the war through the use of his adopted child that he turned into knight-commander, and after making use of another godchild, died of illness right after the war." [Shiva]
"So, then… No way…" [Ryouma]

Shiva-san silently nodded, then he continued,

"Masaharu inherited the throne." [Shiva]

Seriously? Didn't anyone protest?

"Of course, there were those who were against Masaharu becoming the king. But after the war, he was hailed as a hero because of his achievements. And even the commoners were aware that he was the king's illegitimate child, so rather than find some reason to take the position from him, it was decided that it would be best for him to become king instead." [Shiva]

Then Remiri-san interjected, adding,

"The nobles then thought to turn Masaharu into a puppet. After all, despite his power, he was a coward and an obedient man." [Remiri]

There's no doubt about it, that Masaharu is the peerless otherworlder magician. A hero, and at the same time, an otherworlder and a coward. It's exactly as what I'd heard from Gayn's group.

After that, I asked them how Masaharu acted, and apparently he did whatever he wanted. So I guess he really was a tyrant.

But then again, although it wasn't implemented, he did try to enact a number of policies, such as compulsory education, free healthcare, and pension for those who can't work.

That kind of thinking isn't strange at all for someone like me who lives in modern Japan. But as for whether this world can understand that way of thinking or not is another story. There were many who protested against him, and he met those with his two powers as a king and as a powerful magician, silencing any who stood against him.

"The nobles who plotted to turn Masaharu into a puppet, were left unable to do anything but find ways to compromise with the king." [Shiva]

The man they were against was not only the man who saved the country, but also the man who could overturn the battlefield with his magic alone. Moreover, each time he would leave for war, he would say, "I've casted a self-destruct magic on myself. So if ever I should die, I'll be taking the opposing nations with me." Whether that self-destruct magic of his could take the other nations with him is true or not, it was a fact that his magic was beyond the understanding of people, so no one tried to do anything foolish.

The one exception was the other godchild who was referred to as a hero. His name was Shuu. He was a strong knight wholeheartedly trusted by Masaharu. And unlike the other nobles, he didn't fear Masaharu, and exchanged opinions with him.

It was he who aided Masaharu and mediated between him and the nobles; an irreplaceable person that allowed compromises to be made.

"In the end, it wasn't until four years later until Masaharu was to be succeeded. During one of his trips, an assassin attacked him, and he died. The only thing that remained of him was a giant hole that's believed to be the effect of his self-destruct magic. Of course, neither the assassin or the servants, or the escort knights, or the horses and the carriages were left. Not a scar, nor trace could be seen. All of them had vanished." [Shiva]

An assassin, huh? …… It's true that Masaharu might be a tyrant, but it's not like I don't understand his feelings… His methods might have been bad, but I can't deny him either without hearing his side first.

An academy was built in the capital instead of the compulsory education. And the fact that anyone can enter as long as they pay the fees seems to be very much like him. So it's not like he didn't anything for the people at all.

There are many good people who's helped me out, but for Masaharu, he might have had no one else but Shuu beside him. And even if he did become a part of the royal family by his own will, he was still only wanted for his power. After he became king by chance, the nobles tried to turn him into a puppet. If I was in his place, I too would have relied on my powers alone, and tried to threaten others to protect myself.

After I thought those things, I said,

"Rheinbach-sama, Sebasu-san, truly, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for everything." [Ryouma]

They were startled at my words, but continuing, I said,

"I just realized it now, but I'm really glad that the first people I met were members of the Jamil Household." [Ryouma]

Continuing, I told them that I imagined myself in a situation where I had no allies, surrounded only by people who wanted to take advantage of me. Hearing that, the two understood.

"There's really no reason for you to be grateful, you know? And besides, Elia's been much more cheerful since meeting you, Ryouma-kun." [Rheinbach]
"Really? So Elia…!" [Ryouma]

Oh, right! What I remembered this afternoon was Elia! Elia's ancestor is that peerless magician, meaning Masaharu should be her ancestor according to Gayn. But wait a moment… If that's the case, then… madam is royal family? …But then again, they are the household of a duke, so I suppose it's not that weird.

"Something the matter?" [Sebasu]

Suddenly stopping mid-sentence, Sebasu-san became concerned, but I just told him that it was nothing.

After that, the conversation shifted to Elia, and this time I was thanked. They were grateful for me becoming Elia's friend, and helping her make friends.

Elia possesses an enormous amount of magic power, making it difficult for her to control her magic, resulting in her causing a number of accidents. Exaggerated rumors of her spreads causing many of the noble children to fear her. And eventually, even the children who were her friends started to evade her, staring at her with eyes full of fear. Not long after, Elia herself grew to fear herself.

So that's why…

"So what happened then?" [Ryouma]
"Around the time Elia learned how to successfully use elementary magic, she learned how to control her powers, and the rumors petered out. But it's still not something that could be forgotten completely. Making friends is another story, but if it's just acquaintances then there's no problem." [Rheinbach]
"Ojousama had to endure being stared at with fear by her good friends, so she was hesitant to make friends herself. But after becoming friends with Ryouma-sama, that fear has mostly faded." [Sebasu]
"I didn't really do anything noteworthy though. And besides, we were only together for such a short while." [Ryouma]

Sebasu-san and Rheinbach-sama shook their heads at that response.

Even though I just did whatever I wanted? It was only now that I came to understand the situation too…

"That you did not fear Ojousama, looked at her face-to-face, and accepted her… That is more than enough." [Sebasu]
"That's right. Ryouma, you are the impetus that allowed Elia to take her first step. For her to ask you to become her friend on her own volition… Honestly, I was shocked at that time, but at the same time, I was relieved. Besides, I heard that you've been helping her make friends recently as well." [Rheinbach]

Ahh, it's about Miyabi-san. She mentioned in her letter that they've become friends, but it looks like she mentioned it to her family as well.

"Then in that case, you're welcome. But you know… Elia couldn't have made friends unless she moved by herself." [Ryouma]

I'll take their thanks for the meantime, but Elia was definitely the one who worked hard.

You were able to make friends because of me! Is not really something I feel like throwing my chest out for… If it was around seven or something, then maybe… but it wasn't really anything like that.

I was thinking of all sorts of things like that, but since storytelling was mostly done now, I went ahead and slept.

Chapter 27

The next day.

We ate breakfast, and then we walked through the narrow path of the canyon again.

Shiva-san is leading without looking at a map, but if it was just me, I would definitely end up lost because of all the turns.

From what I heard, it's because Shiva-san has used this same path plenty of times before as part of the training of fresh recruits. It's definitely not the most accessible place, but with all the cliffs that could be climbed, it just might be perfect for training.

And speaking of geography, I noticed that the geography here in this area is sometimes weird. It's probably the effect of Masaharu's magic, but there are rock cliffs here that are actually perpendicular to the ground.

If it at least had some slope I'd understand, but I don't think it's natural for terrain to be that perpendicular. Geological formations are things that form after the accumulation of earth and sand after all. And then there are those places that form from hardened lava.

I've also heard that jewels and gold were reported to have been spotted here. It wasn't a meagre amount either, and people would mine out the veins immediately after finding one, so there were quite a number of people searching for them here. But after most of them failed to find anything, they gave up. And the people who found some couldn't make enough of a profit to make it worth the effort either.

We talked about things like that as we walked. And then Shiva-san said,

"We're near the labyrinth. Undead roam in the area near the labyrinth, so get ready." [Shiva]
"Understood." [Ryouma]

As I said that, we walked. The path was at most just big enough for three people to walk side-by-side. There were plenty of places before where the road was wider, but this area we're in right now feels eerily artificial.

"Well we've made it this far, I guess we can take a rest for a bit. This path's connected to the execution grounds that became a labyrinth, so it's being maintained." [Remiri]
"I see, although it doesn't seem to be a straight line." [Ryouma]

The road's being maintained, and yet it has so many turns.

"It's a precaution against escapees, something to buy time in the one-in-a-million chance that a convict for death row manages to escape. For a similar reason, the road before here isn't being maintained as it's not part of the main road, so it's quite hard to cross." [Remiri]

I see... that makes sense. But right after Remiri-san finished talking, the smell of rotting flesh wafted to my nose.

"This rotting stench, could it be?" [Ryouma]
"Yep, it's the undead. Most likely a zombie." [Rheinbach]
"Good timing. I'll go ahead and teach you how to deal with them." [Shiva]

20 seconds passed, and a rotting corpse walking towards us entered our vision.

According to what I've investigated beforehand, the undead of this world like places with little or no sunlight, so they can usually be found is such places. But that doesn't mean they can't function under sunlight.

My impression of my first time seeing a zombie is that they're disgusting. Their flesh is rotting; they stink… But unexpectedly, they can move quite fast.

I expected them to be disgusting, but I didn't expect them to move that fast. Oh, but while I say they're fast, they're only really faster than my expectations, and are walking around the pace of an adult man. So it's not like I'm feeling threatened or anything.

It's just a bit different from the image I had in mind is all. I expected a zombie groaning as it walked one step at a time, very slowly. So it's a bit unexpected that it's actually walking normally.

"Well then, before all else, let's go and confirm the property of the zombies. First—" [Shiva]

Shiva-san ran to the zombie, and swung his halberd diagonally from his shoulder, cutting the zombie in two halves in one swing. After cutting it two more times, Shiva-san came back.

"Just now, I cut it without using any magic, but my attacks had no effect at all. And the zombie just regenerate, and start walking again." [Shiva]

Exactly as Shiva-san had said, the cut zombie began to gather its remaining parts, and started putting itself back together.

"It's not just zombies either. Other undead-type magical beasts can also regenerate. So beating them with only weapons is extremely inefficient. If you really need to beat them with just weapons, then it would be better to use a blunt weapon rather than a sharp one. As that would allow you to crush their bodies thoroughly rather than just cutting them to pieces. Lastly, there are also magical beasts that can't be beaten with such methods, so it's imperative to exercise caution." [Shiva]

Around this time, the zombie finally finished regenerating, and has started walking towards again. Then suddenly, Shiva-san casted 'Wind Cutter' and cut off the Zombie from its waist. The zombie started to regenerate again, but it's far slower this time around.

"You might've noticed it, but these magical beasts regenerate at a slower rate when attacked by magic compared to when they are attacked by weapons. This is said to be because of their dark attribute magic power being dispersed by the magic power of a different attribute. And the most effective magic are those under light attribute. Try hitting it with 'Light Ball' once it finishes regenerating." [Shiva]

After some time, the zombie finished regenerating. Just as I was told to, I casted 'Light Ball'.

"'Light Ball'" [Ryouma]
"a' ,aa' !" [Zombie]

A ball of light appeared on my chest, and in the next moment, it flew towards the zombie in a straight line, piercing through its chest. The zombie groaned in pain as a giant hole could be visibly seen on its chest. The flesh and the bones near the affected area were thoroughly extinguished.

"As can be observed, light magic is extremely effective against the undead. Even the elementary magic, 'Light Ball', can pierce through its body, extinguish it, and greatly weaken it. However, a single shot from 'Light Ball' isn't sufficient. If you wish to kill it in one hit with only 'Light Ball', then you'll have to target its head or chest. Any other place will require two or three shots." [Shiva]

"I understand. I'm surprised to know though that 'Light Ball' could extinguish an undead's body… I've heard that people who die become undead. If by chance I do die, my body won't disappear when hit by 'Light Ball' will it?" [Ryouma]

"Right, your corpse won't disappear from being hit by 'Light Ball'. Only, it's said that a change occurs once a body changes into an undead, but it's not fully understood. Moreover, not all undead come from corpses. There are also those that just naturally appear." [Shiva]

As I received that explanation, another zombie came. As I was about to fire another shot of magic at it, Remiri-san stopped me.

"This time I'll show you how it's done with intermediate magic." [Remiri]

As she said that, she aimed her wand at the zombie, and chanted.

" 'Exorcism' !" [Remiri]

A ball of light as big as a basketball appeared in front of her staff, and hit the zombie. But that ball didn't pierce the zombie. Instead it wrapped it in its light. It was as if it was extinguishing the zombie.

"With this magic, it won't matter where you hit. You'll be able to kill them in one hit no matter what. It costs around 1,500 points of magic power though, so it's a waste to use this kind of magic against zombies. If it's just zombies, 'Light Ball' will do. Just use this when you really have to, or alternatively, you could use fire magic instead of light magic as that's also effective." [Remiri]

Like this I was able to study how to fight undead-types. And I was also able to practice by shooting at the

zombies and skeletons that were roaming on the road.

As a result, I've learned 'Exorcism', and am now even able to clad my blade in 'exorcism', which was quite effective as the undead could be extinguished with a slash.

It's a waste though, as although I'm able to kill three zombies with one cast, a single elementary magic, 'Light Ball', could kill a zombie in one hit… Ah, come to think of it, I wonder what would happen if I just used light attribute magic power instead of an actual magic?

As I thought that, I clad my sword in light attribute magic power, and slashed at an undead. Oh, hey, it worked. It's not the same as 'Exorcism', but I think I can work with this.

After I finished my experiment, Shiva-san and Remiri-san were shocked and went, "What just happened!?" as they hurried over.

As we got closer to the labyrinth, more and more undead have been appearing, causing our pace to greatly slow down.

Also, the labyrinth that was once the execution grounds is apparently located at the center of an artificial bowl-shaped geographical formation. Right now, we're on top of a hill where we can see the entrance to the execution grounds.

We can see a huge, ancient gate from afar that's connected to a tall wall. The door on the right side of the gate is collapsed, so we can also see what's inside the gate. There, we could see some iron bar windows and some buildings made out of stone. As well as an uncountable number of undead.

"That many is a little annoying." [Remiri]
"Couldn't you just make do somehow with consecutive casting of light magic?" [Rheinbach]
"I could also ask my slimes to help." [Ryouma]
"We risk getting surrounded by entering through the gate, so let's lure them here to the hill instead. It'll also help once they clump up." [Shiva]

After our short meeting, we decided to lure our opponents. Everyone else aside from me will be casting advanced magic, while me and my slimes will be cleaning up the remaining undead.

So I opened my 'Dimension Home', and called out my scavenger slimes, acid slimes, metal slimes, iron slims, and light slime. The slimes were itching to go.

The scavenger slimes and acid ones in particular were very excited. Apparently the dark magic power and the rotting meat of the zombies have turned them into quite the delicacy in front of the scavenger slimes. In a similar fashion, the acid slimes were also quite taken by the bones of the undead. I'm happy they're full of spirit, but I'll have to remind them to prioritize safety.

"Alright, let's go! 'Flare Bomb'!" [Rheinbach]

Taking my slimes with me, I neared the gate. And when I was around 700 meters away from it, Rheinbach-sama fired an intermediate fire spell. A ball of fire the size of a basketball was summoned at his spell, and it flew right between me and the gate, causing an explosion. The undead reacted to that booming sound, and the undead began to climb up the hill.

"They're coming, let's go! 'Beam' !!" [Remiri]

Immediately after Remiri-san's chant, a beam of light fired towards the undead, extinguishing almost all in its path. Most were killed, but I couldn't count how many in all.

But the undead wave doesn't end there, and more of them came after the ones Remiri-san extinguished.

"Next is my turn. 'Fire Storm'!" [Rheinbach]

At Rheinbach-sama's spell, a whirlpool of fire was summoned, swallowing the crowd of undead that neared. That blazing whirlpool filled my vision, and I couldn't count how many undead died at Rheinbach-sama's magic.

But more undead came, and they too climbed the hill. But once they gathered, Shiva-san made his move.

" 'Storm Cutter' " [Shiva]

At that moment, a powerful tempest was summoned, and the undead were blown away. After a while, the undead came falling down from the sky as scattered pieces. Again, I couldn't count how many were killed.

As I was thinking such things to myself, the undead began to climb again. And this time, it was Sebasu-san's turn.

" 'Water Fall' "

Sebasu-san raised his hand as he chanted that, and in the next moment, a giant ball of water that looked as if it contained all the water within a swimming pool appeared in the sky, floating.

In the next moment, that giant blob of water fell down to the cliff with a rumbling sound. The blob broke, and it washed away the zombies. The total number of zombies washed away… again: uncountable.

Ah… on top of all the zombies, they even killed the left wall that was fine just a while ago.

Aren't these people a bit too strong? And speaking of Shiva-san… if he had used that 'Storm Cutter' of his in our previous match, I would have definitely lost. Saved by the rules I guess.

"You guys are amazing…" [Ryouma]
"Ryouma-sama, you'll be able to do something like this in no time at all." [Sebasu]
"Advanced magic packs a lot of heat, and can affect a huge area, but it also requires a lot of magic power and control. On top of that, it takes time to cast. It's not something that can be casted consecutively. Save for advantageous situations like just now, it's not something that could be easily cast." [Shiva]
"That aside, it's your and your slimes turn next, Ryouma-kun." [Rheinbach]
"Do your best!" [Remiri]

Oops, I almost forgot!

"I'm going." [Ryouma]

I had the light slime ride on my head, while I went down the cliff with the rest of the slimes. Before me were the undead who appeared to have not learned their lesson as they continued to climb the hill. The skeletons were at the front.

The iron slimes were the first to attack those skeletons.

Using the slope of the hill, the iron slimes rolled towards the skeleton, and then jumped for their chest. The skeletons received a direct hit! Those iron slimes that were basically lumps of iron scattered the skeletons, causing them to collapse. There were also other iron slimes that simply body slammed their foes, crushing bones and flesh alike.

With just this the undead could still regenerate, but at the same time, they were now defenseless. The undead that was now in the middle of regenerating was left unable to fight, so the scavenger slimes feasted on zombies and skeletons alike without any reserve.

But the slimes weren't numerous enough to take on all the fallen undead, so some of the undead would still become able to fight them. During that time, the slimes would fight with the techniques we've trained, spitting their digestive liquids, melting the foes' limbs, taking away their ability to fight, and clinging to the arms that their enemies use against them, and feasting on them.

Around that time, the metal slimes and the iron slimes neared the gate, and they started using the new fighting ability they have learned.

Lately, the iron and metal slimes have become even better at transforming. And the iron slimes are now able to transform from their wheel form into something thinner that resembles the blade of a katana almost immediately. Coupled with their weight and rotation, the sharpness of that form can cut its opponent apart.

They probably learned it since I kept turning them into a blade. From the outside, they look like a chakram when transformed. I tried it using against goblins once, and they were able to easily cut their necks and limbs off. It's quite terrifying honestly.

As for the metal slimes, they rolled, and then they jumped. And having learned how to change even in mid-air, they transformed into a rod-shaped object with a sharp end. Following the force from their previous jump, they thrust themselves into their foes like a throwing spear.

They pierced into the chests of the zombies and the undead, stopping their movements, and leaving them

wide open for the scavenger and acid slimes to feast on.

…At first, I thought to watch them quietly from behind, only to interfere when they're in danger, but… I don't think either me or my light slime need to make a move. I just realized this, but… These guys are actually peerless when it comes to zombies and skeletons! Well, that's the way it is, so I guess I'll just go to the front lines now.

I neared the gate as I ignored the slimes that were trampling all over the undead. There are still a lot of slimes even in this area, so there's no danger of getting surrounded. At the same time though, there're also still a number of enemies.

"A' –" [Zombie[
"U-" [Zombie]
"…" [Skeleton]
" 'Light Ball' 'Light Ball' 'Light Ball'" [Ryouma]

First, I fired off light balls toward the two zombies and one skeleton, headshotting them, and killing them. With a light slime on top of my head like this, we can fire light balls together, killing any undead that comes before us.

Speaking of which, with the light slime on my head like this, I'm able to feel it's magic power. As such I've realized that although the magic casted has the same effect, the slime seems to use less magic power.

Thinking about it again, the wind slimes that I learned chantless casting from might've also been using less magic power… It's just a hunch, but the slimes might actually be able to use magic more efficiently than humans. Remiri-san did also mention that it's possible to become more efficient with magic through training, so it just might be possible.

I continued to kill one undead after another as I thought that to myself. When we finally finished killing everyone, no more undead came to attack us near the gate anymore.

Chapter 28

"Good work~" [Remiri]
"Oops!" [Ryouma]
"Why did you dodge!?" [Remiri]

As we finished subjugating the undead, Remiri-san called out. Realizing I was about to be hugged, I dodged, and Remiri-san started pouting.

"But you suddenly jumped at me, so…" [Ryouma]
"Fine, then… Come on!" [Remiri]

Said Remiri-san as she spread her arms wide open.

… She wants me to hug her?

"What are you doing? Come on!" [Remiri]
"No, it's not come on!" [Ryouma]
"They're soft, you know?" [Remiri]
"Sof–!?" [Ryouma]

Shocked and confused, I accidentally bit my tongue.

"Weren't you looking at my breasts when we first met~? I won't let you touch them, but it can't be helped if they touch you while I hug you, right~?" [Remiri]
"Ah, that's…" [Ryouma]
"Lying's bad, you know? You can't trick oneesan." [Remiri]

What should I say? What should I do? Flustered, and caught in a dilemma, my head began to spin, when Sebasu-san intervened.

"Remiri-sama, please don't tease Ryouma-sama any more than this. We're currently near the labyrinth, so magical beasts could come at any time." [Sebasu]
"And Ryouma-kun, aside from magic, you shouldn't take what Remiri-san says so seriously." [Rheinbach]
"Remiri, since when did you start thanking people for a job well done?" [Shiva]
"Sheesh… But I can't help it, Ryouma-kun's normally so serious, so I thought it'd be funny." [Remiri]

Saved, I thought. But at the same time, I couldn't help but feel some regret too. Remiri-san is a beauty after all. And I am a guy, so…

Come to think of it, this is the first time I've been teased like this since coming to this world. Not that stuff like this happened a lot back in my previous world, but it did happen quite a bit when I would get an annoying job pushed to me… My head would also cool down quickly during those times.

"Sorry, Ryouma-kun. I ended up teasing you. It's normal for boys to want to see breasts, so don't mind it. I'll teach you magic, so forgive me, ok?" [Remiri]
"Ah, yes." [Ryouma]

Unintentionally, I gave a half-hearted reply. Let's change the topic.

"Anyway, it looks like we've already defeated the undead in this area." [Ryouma]
"Looks like it. The undead tend to gather to where living beings are. And they have a number of ways to detect the living, but for the meantime, it should be safe." [Rheinbach]
"That was quite a lot of undead though. I guess we just caught some bad luck, and ran into a horde of them before they were whittled down by someone else." [Shiva]

This maze isn't really popular. The road is a mess, so fighting monsters is a pain. On top of that, there're less magic jewels here compared to other magic-made labyrinths, so the profit here is less.

Because of that the undead rarely gets whittled down, and knights and clergymen need to be sent in order to get rid of the accumulating undead. It's a good opportunity, so they're apparently doing it both as training and as a job.

"Let's go and find a safe place where we can rest first." [Shiva]

"Yeah, I guess we should. If we just go in now, we'll have to deal with more undead, so let's just enter the labyrinth tomorrow." [Remiri]

When there are a lot of undead roaming outside the labyrinth from the afternoon onwards, there's a chance that the undead within the labyrinth are so numerous that they can't help but go outside. We can just go in, and defeat them. But the magic the others used a while ago can't be used consecutively, so defeating the undead will require a ton of effort.

So with that, we decided to create a safe area with 'Holy Space' to camp in instead. And just whittle down the undead coming out of the labyrinth until sunrise.

With that, we started to prepare our camp.

I used 'Holy Space'. And inside that, I opened my 'Item Box' and brought out the special camping tools that I prepared beforehand. When Sebasu-san saw that, he asked,

"Ryouma-sama, what is that?" [Sebasu]
"Camping tools." [Ryouma]

What was in my hands were four iron rods. On one end, was a sharpened tip like that of a stake. And on the other end, was a circle pedestal to which something could be affixed to.

Cladding those rods in ki, I stabbed the sharp end of the iron rods into the north, west, south, and east borders of 'Holy Space' on the ground. And then I took out a spherical-shaped object from my 'Item Box', and placed it on top of a pedestal.

The shape of that object was a bit weird, but any Japanese would recognize it at first glance. It was an alcohol lamp.

Half a year ago, around the time when I was fuzzing over the drunk slime's abilities, and was trying to create fruit wines with it, I concluded that the slime could mostly only be used for my personal amusement. As for why, it's because Serge-san told me that alcohol is a tricky commodity to sell.

Sugar is expensive in this world. And sugar being one of the main ingredients of fruit wine, would mean that I can't make any profit with liquor unless I sell it at a high price.

Moreover, while there are magical beasts that are publicly accepted as consumable meat (so I could technically sell the slimes' alcohol) but at the same time, there are also those that don't want to consume magical beasts depending on the species. Because of that, we concluded that there's a possibility of slime liquor not being popular. As such it's not something worth venturing into unless one is ready to suffer losses.

With that, I decided that it's better to just use it for personal use. At the same time, I wondered whether there were some other ways I could use it, and using alchemy, I was able to create disinfectants, solvents, and fuel.

Although metal content could be found in the alcohol (ethanol) on earth, both drinkable and undrinkable. I couldn't get any metals.

But even then, plenty of soot would come out, so I thought it was fine. But when I created an alcohol lamp out of the sticky slime's concentrated hardened liquid, an idea hit me, and I thought of melting the concentrated sticky liquid. With that it went even better.

Moreover, while the fire lit from just ethanol was pale blue, and was hard to see in bright places. The fire from ethanol mixed with concentrated sticky liquid was bright enough to be useable as a torch. I created this alcohol lamp to make use of that. The alcohol goes into this tube here, and it lasts around an hour per cylinder without having to add more fuel, making it a pretty good tool in my opinion.

There's nothing wrong with using light magic as light, but having options like this would mean being able to save up on magic power. It can also be used for kettles or cooking, so it's no waste either way.

As I lit it, I taught Sebasu-san how to use the normal-sized alcohol lamp I created for kettle use.

"I see. It's brighter than candles, and also quite hot. Like this it'll definitely be useful even for cooking outside. Ryouma-sama, if you don't mind, could I use this for a while?" [Sebasu]

In response, I just gave Sebasu-san a few points to be wary of when using it, then I lent it to him. At that, Remiri-san called out to me.

"Hey, Ryouma-kun." [Remiri]
"What is it?" [Ryouma]
"What did you make this bedding out of? It's really light, and it feels really good." [Remiri]

Looks like she's interested in my sleeping bag. Although I say 'sleeping bag', it's not the type where I completely insert my body into. Rather I took a mattress, cut it into two, and sewed it up at the base. I made it that way so I could easily run away in case I need to. Well, I'm always in my 'Dimension Home' though, so I've never really had any situations where I needed to go outside immediately.

Incidentally, the materials used in this sleeping bag are the fluffs of the fluff slime that I caught half a year ago. While I was researching the fluff slime, and was watching the fluffs fluttering about in the air, I thought to use it to create pillows and mattresses.

When I first tried it out, I just filled a nearby jute bag with the fluffs, so the resulting product had a horrible texture. But I was at least able to prove that it's possible. So after that, I dropped by Serge-san's store, bought some sheets, and sewed them together. And like that, I was able to create a sack that had a nice texture, was soft, light, and warm, resulting in a product similar to that of a quilt.

Then I went a step further, and even treated the sheets with waterproofing. I also made it so that the fluffs inside would be uniform and not randomly arranged. After that, I revised it a few more times by trying it out, until finally I was able to complete my sleeping bag.

I also took the fluff slimes with me to the abandoned mine in Gimuru to observe it. As a result, I understood that the fluff slimes reproduce in the same way as the dandelions do.

At the start, a majority of the nucleus wouldn't grow even without splitting, and died. Apparently, just like any other seed, the nucleus of the fluff slimes won't grow unless it receives the proper nutrients. So it needs to fall to the ground, and absorb the nutrients around it. If the nutrients in the soil are insufficient, then it won't grow either.

As proof of that, they barely grew with normal soil, but a great number of slimes were born with the soil that's been cultivated with the scavenger slime's fertilizer. Soil isn't needed for its growth later on, but for a fluff slime to become a fluff slime from its fluff, it needs to have the proper nutrients.

And because I've been using the fertilizers of the scavenger slimes so much, I had to take on the latrine pits request. Then again I don't only use it for the fluff slimes, I also use it for plantations, and growing medicinal plants for my wood magic, so it's not really a waste.

Because of the scavenger slime's deodorizing and cleaning abilities, it doesn't stink, so that's good. Also, I never realized this back in the forest because I would use up the fertilizers immediately, but apparently, I can use alchemy to dry the fertilizers, and turn them into powder form. Which in effect allows me to preserve them.

Cleaning the latrine pits is also a request from the guild, so while it doesn't make a lot of money, it's still income. The other adventures often ask me why I'm still doing jobs like that, but it's actually a relatively good job for me.

"Ah, I have to make the scavenger slimes spit out fertilizers now…" [Ryouma]

Immediately, I opened the 'Dimension Home' and brought out two large wine barrels, and a staircase made out of stone. There I had all the scavenger slimes throw up fertilizer.

They had a great banquet with the zombies just now, so if I don't let them throw up the extra nutrients, they'll end up reproducing again. Because I've been having them do the latrine pit requests for the fluff slime's sake, they've been gradually increasing. And now, they currently number 5,009.

I don't mind them splitting a few at a time, but if they all split now, it'll take me more than a day to finish contracting with them. It's difficult managing slime reproduction with slimes that reproduce quickly.

Moreover, according to Caulkins-san and the others, there's a limit to how much the slimes can split. Once they go past this limit, the affected slimes will reproduce rapidly, causing a phenomenon known as 'Slime Stampede'. The burden placed on the affected slimes are great, so after the phenomenon, the slimes will be weak.

I'm digressing, but the ones who discovered this was a slime research lab in the past that's still being treated coldly today. Their hypothesis was that big slimes would appear after feeding a slime continuously. As a

result, the slimes blew up, and started splitting rapidly. Causing their numbers to overflow even into the other rooms of the facility. After that, because of the extermination of the slimes, and the weakened slimes trying to get whatever nutrients they could get, a large number of research materials and theses were lost, which in turn cased the slime researchers then to be greatly hated.

Now, going back to the story.

I gathered over 5,000 slimes, but I couldn't get any more slimes other than a king slime. I don't know whether this means that there's no more transformations, or that the number's only insufficient. I want to solve this question soon, but I can't have them reproduce now all at the same time.

I continued to let the scavenger slimes throw up fertilizer. Whenever the scavenger slimes would fill up a barrel, I would use my alchemy, removing all the water content, and filling bags with the powder fertilizer. There's not much meaning in hiding anything from the others, so I'm not even trying anymore.

For a while, Remiri-san and Sebasu-san stared at me, wondering what I was doing. When they asked me, I explained to them, and they helped me out. Thanks to them, I was able to finish everything in no more than 20 minutes.

Speaking of which, not even a single undead came out during that time.

Taking the opportunity, Remiri-san also taught me the light magic, 'Beam'. But the only thing I could cast was something that looked like light with no power at all behind it. The magic power consumption was also high, so I still can't use it in battle.

If Remiri-san's 'Beam' was like the ones from the robots in manga and anime, my beam was nothing more than the light from the magnifying lens, amplifying the sun's light. Joking aside, I'll have to gradually work on it.

TL Note: Remiri-san said 'Come on' in English. Written in katakana, but English nevertheless.

Chapter 29

Edit: Reis -> Wraiths

Girls and boys at the age of seven shouldn't sit on the same chair.
An old Chinese saying that means that girls and boys at the age of seven have already formed their own consciousness about their respective genders, and as such should start doing things separately.

Emotional Resistance Skill/Mental Resistance Skill is the same. It just means defense against intangible painful stuff.

The sun was beginning to set by the time we finished preparing our camp.

"Should be about time for the undead to come out." [Rheinbach]
"Yeah… they should be coming any moment now." [Remiri]

Said Remiri-san as she caressed my sleeping bag. I guess she really likes it.

"Hmm… This is a really good mattress." [Remiri]
"I could make one for you if you want." [Ryouma]
"Really? Then please." [Remiri]
"Sure." [Ryouma]

She's teaching me magic after all, so this could be as thanks. But just a mattress doesn't seem to be enough, I wonder if there's anything else I could do for her.

As I thought that to myself, I entered my 'Dimension Home', and began making a new mattress.

Carefully sewing the sheets together, I created a sack. Positioning and repositioning the sheets over and over, sewing even the ends, filling up the mattress with fluff equally, and taking measurements repeatedly. Doing all this by myself would take a lot of time, but I had the metal slimes' help, so I was able to finish quickly.

While I was creating a new bedding in the past, the metal slimes suddenly learned the sewing skill.

The metal slimes would extend their bodies, turning the extended portion into a needle. And after inserting a thread into that needle, they would pierce it into the cloth. The needle would exit, and then enters, delivering the thread. Exiting, and entering, the process would repeat itself over and over resembling a wave.

Naturally, surprise took me when I first saw that scene, but brushing that shock away, I taught the slimes many things. And nowadays, the metal slimes can backstitch or even do a loop stitch. And through the help of such metal slimes, I was able to quickly complete the fluff slime's fluff mattress.

However, I found myself with too many fluffs, so I made some mattresses for the other as well. Unfortunately, the materials weren't enough for all four, so three was the most I could make.

As soon as I finished, I left the 'Dimension Home'. When I got out, I noticed that there were now undead outside the holy space.

Looks like the undead have finally started coming out, I thought. But powerless, the undead could only stare at us as from a meter away, unable to enter the area of the holy space.

Staring blankly at the undead, I heard Remiri-san call out to me, so I turned towards the voice. There, I saw them drinking tea peacefully.

"Ah, Ryouma-chan. Did you finish making the mattress?" [Remiri]
"Yes. I also had more materials than expected, and I was able to make two more on top of yours." [Ryouma]
"Two more?" [Remiri]
"I thought to make one for everyone, but unfortunately, I didn't have enough materials." [Ryouma]

Although I was talking with Remiri-san, I couldn't help but look back to the surrounding undead.

"Are you worried about the undead?" [Shiva]
"Yes, I haven't had much opportunities to drink tea with monsters nearby who aren't slave demons."

[Ryouma]
"I guess it can't be helped then. But still… do try not to worry yourself too much. It won't be good for your health, you know?" [Rheinbach]

After Rheinbach-sama said that, Remiri-san suddenly burst out loud, saying,

"Exactly!" [Remiri]
"What is it all of the sudden?" [Ryouma]

When I asked that, Remiri-san laughed loudly as if she'd just thought of something good. Then she puffed her chest out, and said,

"Since we're lacking a mattress, Ryouma-kun, you should share a mattress with me and sleep with me instead!" [Remiri]

...Haah!?

"What do you mean?" [Ryouma]
"You don't have enough mattresses for everyone, right? Well it's not very nice to leave one of our friends without that comfy mattress of yours, so in order for us all to have a good night's rest, Ryouma-kun and I should sleep together!" [Remiri]

Wait, wait… That might be true, but…

"If I recall correctly, there's an old saying that goes, 'girls and boys at the age of seven shouldn't sit on the same chair' right?" [Ryouma]
"No problem!" [Remiri]
"What do you mean, no problem!?" [Ryouma]

This isn't working… Someone please help me, I thought, sending a glance at the others as I did. But to my dismay, the other three only quietly shook their heads.

"Ryouma-kun, Remiri sometimes acts like this, and it's a little difficult finding out whether she's serious or not… She seemed to be joking this afternoon, so I stopped her. But she looks to be serious this time around, so unfortunately, we won't be able to stop her… sorry." [Rheinbach]
"Just sleeping together shouldn't be that embarrassing though, so isn't it fine?" [Shiva]

But that puts me at a bad spot… In my past life, I had little interaction with women apart from my mother and the women in the office. There weren't any beauties on the level of Remiri-san either. It's not like I've had zero interactions with the female workers in the office, but they didn't really like me either, so the most interaction I've had with them was the absolute minimum when we had to communicate for work.

In my private life, the only contact I had was my mother. I've never had any relations with the women in my office either. So naturally, I've never had any experience sleeping with women. And of course, that includes just sleeping together. I've never even dated... Actually, forget dating, I haven't even so much as held a girl's hand. Ah, actually I think there were one or two times back in elementary school because of an event, but the girls hated it so much, I can still remember the look of unwillingness on their faces.

While I was caught in my own thoughts, thinking of stuff like that, Remiri-san suddenly proposed this.

"No matter how much you dislike the idea my decision stands… But alright how about this then? More undead will be coming out of the labyrinth soon, so how about we compete in who kills more undead? And naturally, should I win, we sleep together. Alright?" [Remiri]

Somehow the discussion's finally progressing… Although I'm not really that against it. It's just that stimulation I'm not used to will cause unnecessary burden on my mind, so… Sigh… I'm supposed to have an emotional resistance skill, but it's not doing its job at all, is it? Even though this situation is something I would normally be happy about when thinking of…

Wait! This isn't the time to be thinking of stuff like that! Aren't I the one in a disadvantage in a magic showdown!? Remiri-san can wipe out the undead in one shot!

"Isn't this duel too favorable for Remiri-san?" [Ryouma]
"Then let's decide on a rule. How about we both only limit ourselves to using 'Light Ball' in this fight? This way there won't be that big of a difference between us.

And then let's add a time limit as well. You have too much of an upper hand if we make it until we run out of magic power, and the opposite would be true if we limited the number of shots we could make as I have more experience than you. So a time limit would be the fairest, right?" [Remiri]
"True, that's definitely the fairest." [Ryouma]
"Good. As for the referees, Sebasu-san and the others will be the ones to count how many undead we've each killed." [Remiri]

Ah! Did I end up agreeing to her!?

Like this, I was partly-forced to enter a match with Remiri-san.

We needed to wait for the undead to gather first, so we sat there in the holy space, drinking tea peacefully. One hour passed, and Sebasu-san mentioned that there were enough undead.

We will be fighting the undead from inside the holy space. Currently, there are zombies and skeletons in every direction, while souls and semi-transparent human-shaped bodies and mist-like bodies could be seen floating in the air.

The balls of flame floating are known as wisps, and the mist-like and human-like bodies are called wraiths. They're both weak to light magic, but the wraiths can attack mentally and haunt and possess humans.

"Are you ready?" [Remiri]
"Yes, I'm ready anytime." [Ryouma]
"OK, let's go." [Remiri]
"The time limit is 10 minutes. Start!" [Sebasu]

The operation to defeat undead began. This is going to be a war of attrition so I fired a 'Light Ball' to the skeleton right in front of me.

" 'Light Ball' " [Ryouma]

The 'Light Ball' I fired went straight for the head of the skeleton, extinguishing it. But the light ball didn't disperse there as it continued to fly in a straight line, piercing through a number of undead, and extinguishing them. The undead tend to crowd together, so it's not that weird. I 've also done it a number of times in the past.

"'Light Ball' 'Light Ball'" [Remiri]
"What is that!?" [Ryouma]

Remiri-san, who was behind me, chanted only once, yet immediately 10 balls of light were summoned. And she shot those 10 balls of light with deadly accuracy, destroying the heads of the undead.

"This is a technique called, Parallel Casting. Using a lot of magic power, and the right image, I can cast the same spell several times with one chant of 'Light Ball'. But being able to do something like this takes a bit of practice." [Remiri]

Remiri-san continued to fire off her spells while explaining, not even stopping once. And after finishing her explanation, she showed me a smile that seemed to say she's won.

And it was then that I realized it. Could it be that the reason there's no limit in the shots taken… was for this!?

Seeing my expression, Remiri-san spoke, saying,

"A bit too late to realize it now, 'Light ball'." [Remiri]

I knew it! Now that it's come to this, I don't have any choice but to use parallel casting as well. Remiri-san did teach me how to use it just now after all. Most likely because she thinks she's won already.

"'Light Ball' … 'Light Ball' 'Light Ball' " [Ryouma]

Or so I thought… But what is this? It's ridiculously difficult.

The first time I tried it, I used a lot of magic, and I was able to cast the magic several times. But the most I was able to make were five balls. Anymore and I couldn't maintain the spell.

The second time, I went ahead with just the five balls, but I couldn't move the balls in different direction, and they all attacked the same spot.

The third time, I only made two balls, and I was able to move them in two different directions, but it was hard to aim. One failed to kill the undead, and the other actually missed. It's like writing with both hands at the same time. Remiri-san mentioned it herself too, but this really isn't something I can do right away.

Since parallel casting won't work, there was nothing else I could do but just cast the normal light ball. I'm able to kill the undead fairly fast with this method, but the difference in our scores just keep increasing.

Remiri-san fires 10 shots in one chant, but the most I can do in that time is fire two or three shots… I know there's no point asking for it, but it would be great if I could sweep the surrounding area quickly… Isn't there any way?

While thinking of that, I kept firing the light balls.

There's no problem hitting with the light balls accurately while deep in thought.

After all, it's safe since the undead can't enter the holy space even if they tried. Then with my alertness lowered to the minimum, I ended up likening the situation to them time when I was playing in the arcades back in my previous life. And since the zombies aren't even attacking, it's as if we're playing super easy mode.

What if I tried doing this like I was playing super easy mode? …Nah, that would just end up like those target shooting in festivals.

Ah… speaking of which, I haven't played any games since coming to this world, huh? I wonder what happened to that series.

There was a point in time when I got into it quite a bit… But I didn't have any money, so I couldn't go to the arcade much. But there were some times when I really wanted to shoot at some zombies, so I would go there for just one round. If I recall correctly, it was important to choose the appropriate ammo for each area. I was bad at it, so I don't know that much about the game, but I'm sure there was an explosive shell, a machine gun, and a shotgun…

My thoughts were getting further and further, but it was here that I suddenly thought of it. And I thought to myself, why not improve the light ball spell and turn it into a bullet?

Immediately I tried it out… I don't understand the explosive shells much, and the machine gun would drain my magic power quickly, so… I guess shotgun would be for the best? The shotgun's shells fires buckshot. Its small shell supposedly releases its contents in a scattered manner… So with that in mind, I visualized the image of the light ball into a small bullet that scatters itself…

" 'Light Ball' " [Ryouma]

The light ball scattered exactly as I had visualized it, but the damage was weak. The zombie in front of me was wounded, but it didn't die. Apparently, I spread the light ball too much, causing the damage of every individual shot to weaken.

Since that's how it is, I put 10 times more magic power into light ball than normal, and fired it. The result? Not only were the zombies in fan-shaped spread in front of me killed, even the wraiths in the air died. Since it's not really needed for the light ball to spread even in the air, I guess 10 times is a bit too much.

I have enough magic power, but this time I decided to compact the area affected. As a result, the power required was reduced to half of the last shot, requiring only five times as much magic power as a normal shot. Then adding to that, I thought of how the shotgun shells also had different sizes for the shots inside it. Visualizing that, I visualized the essentials of holy space into each of those shots, distributing magic power at the same time… as a result, I was able to equally divided the five times of magic power into 50 different shots. Then I fired it.

" 'Light Ball' … Ku" [Ryouma]

Not good, the magic power is hard to control, I thought. And just as the fired light ball shot towards the target, it dispersed before even hitting it. As a result, only two zombies were killed. Focusing, I tried one more time.

The match continued, as I continued to focus on my control, honing the new magic as I killed more and more zombies. Soon Remiri-san began to panic a little at my light ball's newfound power as she would throw glances at me from time to time, checking up on me.

But then Sebasu-san's countdown began.

"10, 9, 8, 7, 6…" [Sebasu]

It's almost over! Then in that case, I'll have to fire this new magic, 'Lightshot', now! Visualizing the image… I fired it! Fire!

"'Lightshot'" [Ryouma]

That last cast was the normal five times more magic power than normal, but all the zombies within 3m area in front were filled with holes, and exterminated. The power's much lower, but having decreased the consumption to half, it's not so bad.

"Stop casting!!" [Sebasu]

At Sebasu-san's words, the match ended. And the result…

I lost.

I was able to take back the loss from the start of the match with the improved light ball, but, the last shot was a foul. I kept improving my light ball, and in the end, that last shot that I made was good, but at that moment, I called it 'Lightshot'…

Rule 1: The use of magic other than 'Light Ball' is prohibited.
I thought it was fine at first since I was just improving light ball, and actually, Sebasu-san thought so as well. But at the last moment I called it a different name, so in the end it became a foul.

In other words, I lost because I lost myself in focusing too much in improving the new magic that I ended up forgetting the rules.

"I started to panic halfway through, but in the end, it's my win! I didn't expect you to come up with a new magic in this short time though." [Remiri]

Said Remiri-san with a laugh. After that, she asked me how I did it, and I explained it to her. Having aroused her curiosity, Remiri-san tried it herself, and she understood. Then with a serious face, she said this,

"Ryouma-san, this magic is amazing. 100 magic power for one cast of 'Light Ball' is 500 for 'Light Shot', but although it's only an elementary magic, it can actually affect a bigger area than the intermediate magic, 'Exorcism'. It's an extremely useful magic when fighting undead. But I think it'd be better if you don't teach this to other people so freely." [Remiri]

Why?

"Is there a problem? Like with the improvements I made?" [Ryouma]
"Nope, this magic is well-made. The problem isn't the result, rather it's the fact that it's too difficult." [Remiri]
"You mean just like how there are few people who can use advanced light magic?" [Ryouma]

After nodding once, Remiri-san explained. Light shot is a magic that requires high control of magic power. And because it's a spell that tries to bring out much power at the cost of little magic power, only those that can use light magic at an advanced level will truly be able to bring out its power.

But because there are few people who can use light magic up to the advanced level, there are very few who would be able to learn the magic. And the people who can't learn the magic won't be satisfied with just accepting their own incompetence.

In other words, they will start blaming me, saying that I'm a bad teacher. They might also accuse me of hiding some secret that's causing them to be unable to use the magic correctly. Apparently, this is something that commonly happens when trying to teach advanced magic to others.

Hiding the secrets behind a spell I made myself isn't really something that would get me in trouble, but it's still better to just keep quiet, and not risk causing trouble, so Remiri-san asked me not to teach it so freely.

At the same time, Sebasu-san, who was listening, also asked me to keep quiet about it.

Apparently, Sebasu-san has also experienced something similar in the past, causing his words to be heavy with emotion, and he said that depending on the person he'd rather not teach dimension magic. It's rare seeing Sebasu-san show such negative emotions… actually, it's my first time, so I couldn't help but be shocked.

Anyway, let's keep their warning in mind.

And then evening came.

We decided to take turns sleeping. And so me and Remiri-san entered the mattress to sleep. And since I lost, naturally, I had to sleep with her.

But… I can't sleep…

The mattress is big enough so that there's room even if I turn around, but I ended up becoming Remiri-san's pillow. And because of the height difference, there are two soft things on top of my head right now.

Let me say it again. It's time to sleep, and yet… I can't sleep!

Seeing me like that, Remiri-san called out to me.

"Can't sleep?" [Remiri]
"Y-Yeah…" [Ryouma]

As I said that, Remiri-san began to rub my head.

"What are you doing…?" [Ryouma]
"Mn? I used to this a lot for my younger brother before when he couldn't sleep. And right after, he'd fall asleep immediately." [Remiri]
"You had a younger brother?" [Ryouma]

As I asked that, Remiri-san replied.

Apparently, Remiri-san has a younger brother whose much younger than her. She hasn't met him since leaving the dark elf village, but during that time, her younger brother's height was around mine. And apparently he was also good at magic. I resembled him a lot, she said.

After that, I asked her what dark elf life was like.
The dark elves are few in number, but they live in villages. Amongst the dark elves, there are also those who cultivate land, and those that live as nomads. And although the actual frequency differs from each village, there are many villages that move every year.

When I asked her why they won't settle down, she mentioned that cultivating and travelling are for the sake of teaching their children how to live. As for cultivating the land, it depends on the villages, but there are many reasons such as to make money or as trade in order to get something they need.

In Remiri-san's village, they're doing it both as training and a way to make money, but the villagers in her village are eccentrics, and they find satisfaction in cultivating lands that are difficult to cultivate. A village full of cultivation enthusiasts in other words.

Apparently, the dark elves are famous for cultivating lands. Be it asking them to cultivate one, or for advice.

Incidentally, the elves pass on their lands in the forest for generations, protecting their land as they live on it. The opposite of the dark elves. But of course there are exceptions for both, and there are those that leave their respective villages to become adventurers, and those that choose a place they like to settle down in.

As for Remiri-san, she became an adventurer, and because of her achievements, she was asked by the

previous king to work for the kingdom. As a result, she became a royal court magician, but now that her contract has ended, she's currently a freelancer, and is at a loss whether to go back to adventurer work or go back to her family.

As Remiri-san continued to talk like that, she fell asleep.

But I still can't sleep. Why? Because the one thing keeping me from sleeping is still here.

Even if I'm like this, I'm a guy. On top of that I'm an old uncle, so this situation is quite difficult for me for various reasons.

For the meantime, I closed my eyes, enduring the softness behind me, and the almost painful beating of my heart. Like this I quietly waited, without waking Remiri-san, for the time to switch with someone else.

When the time to switch finally came, I killed lots of undead, and drove away all of my worldly desires. I managed to subjugate over half of the undead coming out of the labyrinth, but in the end, I couldn't get a wink of sleep. I'm used to all-nighters back in my previous life, and I have sleep resistance, so it's not really a problem, but if I were a normal child, I'd be tottering by now.

And then, dawn came. After breakfast, I took a peek at my status board, and I noticed that a new skill was there.

Charm Resistance Lv1

It's the proof that I overcame last night's trial.

Chapter 30

As we completed our preparations, the time to enter the labyrinth finally came.

When speaking of labyrinths, you might imagine something grand, some exaggerated image, but this labyrinth isn't quite like that. This labyrinth does have a tinge of melancholy to it, but from the outside, it's really nothing more than ruins.

With a light slime on my head, and a king scavenger slime following along, I entered the labyrinth along with everyone else.

The labyrinth is mostly rectangular in shape. Going deeper into the labyrinth from the entrance, one could see the lodging for the executioners and the convicts. And then, there's also a place for waiting during work, and a reception center for the convicts. The execution grounds themselves are divided in an order, and no traps or treasures could be found in the area.

The interior of the labyrinth was dark, having no light. But with a portable alcohol lamp or light magic from either ours or the light slime, we had no difficulties finding our way.

As we continued to walk, a wraith suddenly slipped through the walls. But with a single shot from my 'Light Shot', I made short work of it. The rest of the zombies and skeletons that were in the area were taken care of by the king scavenger slime who would swallow and melt them.

Since the path was small, the king scavenger slime could easily fill the path with its 'Enlarge' skill, and with its 'Overeating' ability, it could freely feast on the undead, and protect us at the same time. The sight of us moving forward with the king scavenger slime in front like that looked much like a tsunami.

Thanks to that, we had little burden on our end, and the only thing we had to do was dispose of the wraiths that would pass through the walls.

"And here I thought we'd have to work our asses off since we didn't thin them out enough." [Rheinbach]
"Indeed, we're barely lifting our fingers here." [Remiri]
"I did think the slimes would be a strong hand after seeing them fight yesterday… but I didn't expect that we'd end up walking through this labyrinth so comfortably." [Shiva]
"Ah, Sebasu-san, please give the slime some water." [Ryouma]
"Understood, 'Water'" [Sebasu]

Sebasu-san conjured some water with his water magic, and the king scavenger slime happily drank it. After 10 seconds, the king scavenger slime's body shook, indicating that it was full.

"Thank you very much, Sebasu-san. That's enough water now." [Ryouma]
"If it's something like this, please feel free to ask me anytime." [Sebasu]

After that, we continued to walk a bit more.

I don't know what it's like for the other labyrinths, but this labyrinth is quite spacious. But then again, perhaps it's only expected. After all, the place needs to accommodate the convicts on death row and the employees. Just the lodging alone would take a lot of space, but then they even have other facilities too.

"Shiva, the herbs (eternal darkness) are down at the basement right?" [Rheinbach]
"Yes, they should be growing at the execution site in the basement. I've gone there plenty of times to train the new recruits, and have seen those herbs a lot, so they should be there." [Shiva]

The eternal darkness (herb) that we're looking for is a kind of herb that grows gregariously in places with no light like caves. When Shiva-san heard that, he mentioned that he had seen such herbs before by the execution site down the basement.

Speaking of which, there are various methods by which execution is done in this facility, so the place that the eternal darkness (herb) is growing in is one of those.

That area is an execution site with nothing but an ever extending spiral staircase going deep down into the ground, a hole, and an apparatus for restraining the convicts. Also known as the execution grounds of

starvation. As the name implies, the convict is left within the execution site with no food or water, leaving him there until he dies of starvation.

The other execution sites also appear to be equally cruel, but they are not being used in present day.

"This is also something related to the godchilds. They said that it was inhuman, and most of the godchilds, along with Masaharu and Shuu, protested against it in the past." [Rheinbach]
"Punishment nowadays is mostly limited to fines or forced labor. Intensity of which varies according to the weight of one's crimes.

For example, a mere fight in a town would only get one fined. Pickpocketing and theft on the other hand, would be forced labor for the first time. The second time around would just increase the duration. But robbery and banditry would have one penalized to an indefinite period of forced labor. The sentence can be reduced with some negotiation, so the exact period can't be defined." [Shiva]

Since we weren't having any trouble with the undead at all, I spent the time talking with Rheinbach-sama and Shiva-san about the execution grounds and its history. As a result, this entire trip has started to look more like a tour rather than a dungeon search.

Halfway to the execution grounds of starvation, we entered the reception center for the convicts, and the path suddenly grew bigger.

"The path suddenly became wider." [Ryouma]
"There used to be rooms for the convicts at both sides in this reception center, but after the entire facility was shut down, they took away everything that could be used." [Shiva]
"With all the cells gone, the path became bigger. And if you look closely, you'll notice that there are also unnatural holes both on the floor and on the ceiling." [Rheinbach]

Now that he mentions it, there are definitely holes on the ground and on the ceiling.

Around that time, undead with a different atmosphere from the others suddenly came out.

"K…Kill…" [Undead]
"Money…Money…" [Undead]

The zombies until now have only been groaning at most, but these ones were actually repeating comprehensible words!

"These are zombies with attachment to the world when they were alive. That attachment has just been passed on their zombified forms. They're not any stronger than their normal zombie counterparts, but to differentiate them from the others, we call them Intellizombies. This isn't an official name however." [Remiri]

After Remiri-san's explanation, we quickly exterminated the Intellizombies with the king scavenger slime's help. The king scavenger slime took care of the center, while Shiva-san and I disposed of the undead attacking us from the flanks.

And just as Remiri-san said, the intellizombies weren't any stronger than the normal zombies.

After that we continued to walk again, and after some time, we left the reception center and reached a boundary leading to an execution site. Suddenly, the atmosphere changed. The atmosphere hasn't changed at all since we entered the labyrinth, so the sudden change gave me a bad feeling.

"This…" [Ryouma]
"Come to think of it, it's your first time, right, Ryouma? The change in atmosphere is because we're near the center of the magic labyrinth." [Rheinbach]
"It feels different because it's the place where the magic is gathered. Magicians in particular feel the change in atmosphere the strongest." [Remiri]
"Because the magic power in the surrounding area is stronger normal, there's also a chance that a powerful magical beast might have been born, so be careful." [Shiva]

Like that we proceeded with careful attention to our surroundings. After a while, we entered a hallway with windows. From the window, a courtyard-like area with gallows could be seen along with a great number of undead prowling it vicinity.

We continued to walk as we followed the hallway, and eventually the sound of metal entered our ears.

"This sound is most likely a roam weapon. It's getting nearer." [Shiva]
"Then I guess it's my turn to shine." [Remiri]

A roam weapon is a weapon that floats and attacks living beings by itself. It's an undead-type magical beast.

Weapons that have killed many men and beasts alike that have been left for a long time in places with dense concentration of magic power have a tendency to become roam weapons.

And the only way to defeat these roam weapons is by destroying them. Either with magic or by physical attack. However, being a weapon by nature, they are quite tough, and difficult to destroy with physical attacks. Because of that, magic is generally the common approach to subjugating them.

"It's here." [Remiri]

Suddenly, 2 maces, an axe, a spear, and two one-handed swords suddenly came flying at us at running speed.

We were also ready to fight, but with the magic Remiri-san calmly invocated, there was no need for us to fight.

"'Shadow Bind'" [Remiri]

The surrounding shadows in the ceiling and in the wall suddenly extended themselves as a number of black ropes, binding the roam weapons. The bound roam weapons tried to break free, but with several shots of 'Light Ball', the roam weapons stopped moving, and as soon as they were unbound, they fell down to the ground.

"And it's ove~r." [Remiri]

After easily defeating the 6 roam weapons, Remiri-san threw us a huge smile. I congratulated Remiri-san for a job well done, and then I asked her what that magic was just now.

"That just now was 'Shadow Bind'. It's a magic resulting from the fusion of light and shadow. A magic that requires a super high level of control." [Remiri]

Remiri-san puffed her chest out as she said that. According to her, there are actually few people that could use this magic. And her being able to use this magic is one of the biggest factors contributing to her being invited to become a royal court magician.

After that, she showed me another spell known as 'Dispel', which was needed in order to recover the fallen roam weapons.

While it's possible to just pick up the defeated roam weapons, and sell them. There are times when the remaining dark magic in the weapons curse its owners, inflicting mental and physical damage to them.

'Dispel' is needed in order to remove that curse. And after dispelling he roam weapons, the weapons will be safe to take back home.

"Curses can also be caused artificially, so you should learn dispel too as a precaution. I'll teach you later." [Remiri]
"Thank you very much. I'll be in your care." [Ryouma]

After that, we continued to walk while defeating the undead that came our way, and after 10 minutes, we finally reached the execution grounds of starvation.

"We arrived a lot faster than expected." [Ryouma]
"It's thanks to Shiva, who knew the place well, and Ryouma's slime. Normally, it would have taken a lot more effort." [Rheinbach]
"True, I definitely don't remember having this much of an easy time when going here. But it's still going to get harder from here on.

Zombies are born easily at the center of the execution grounds of starvation. Amongst the zombies are also the higher ranked variety, ghouls. The ghouls regenerate faster than the zombies, they move faster, and they have sharper claws. And while there are D Rank adventurers that can beat them alone, there are also a lot that can't." [Shiva]

After making sure to heed Shiva-san's warning, I asked the light slime to light up the area, and then I carefully entered the door.

What greeted us on the other side were three zombies. With my sword wrapped in light attribute magic power, I made short work of the zombies.

As we entered the execution grounds, the spiral staircase they spoke of came to sight. It was much bigger than I expected. Each step was 7m wide and 3m tall, extending downwards in a counter-clockwise spiral, while spacious landings could be seen here and there.

"They're here again." [Remiri]

As if the zombies were reacting to the sound of the door opening, the zombies down below started to climb the stairs. I ordered the king scavenger slime to defeat the zombies, but three amongst that blob of zombies jumped over it.

"Ghouls! 'Light Shot'!" [Remiri]

Remiri-san immediately fired of a 'Light Shot', stopping two of the ghouls. Then with another shot, she subjugated them.

The remaining ghoul was pierced by Shiva-san's halberd, and then cut to pieces by the following consecutive casts of 'Wind Cutter'.

The ghouls are less grotesque compared to the zombies. They look a lot more like humans. The king scavenger slime wasn't having any difficulties with the zombies, so I just left those to him, while I went ahead and fought the ghouls.

The oncoming ghoul raised its claws, and slashed against me.

It's definitely faster than the zombies, but——

"You're still too slow." [Ryouma]

Before the ghoul's claw could descend, I cut its torso, and then cut it down from its head down to its neck. The ghoul then fell down to its back, and never regenerated again.

Good, it's working. It's true that they're fast, but compared to Shiva-san, they're still something I can handle. With the battle magic technique, I'll have no problems fighting them.

"We'll descend the stairs gradually like this, and then hit them back hard once we get to a landing. Also, have the slimes eat the corpses. Fighting will get difficult once the corpses accumulate." [Shiva]

Following Shiva-san's orders, we descended the stair case as we defeated the attacking zombies.

Once we got to a landing, the ones to fight in front were me, Shiva-san, and the King Scavenger Slime.

Rheinbach-sama, Sebasu-san and Remiri-san were to cast magic from up the stairs, whittling down the number of the undead that were climbing up.

In order not to let the undead reach the three up the stairs, I made sure to put to practice the advice I got from Shiva-san a few days ago.

After defeating the ghouls in front of me, a group of ghouls tried to jump over their corpses, but I quickly fired a 'Lightshot' towards them, causing them to fall down to the ground. More ghouls came to attack me in that window, coming from the right. So moving my blade up from the right shoulder to my left flank, I cut the ghouls apart. The ghouls' claws came slashing at me, but I dodged their claws, and at the same time, I wielded my sword at my left flank, fired a 'light shot' to the ghouls that fell before and were now trying to stand up, and then cut the ghoul that was in front of me from its waist.

There are still holes in my swordplay and magic, I thought.

In the next moment, two zombies came attacking at me at almost the same time from both sides from diagonally in front. The one to the left was closer, so I dodged its attack first, and struck it with my blade, and

kicked it, making some distance. The one to the right came almost right after that, so I cut that one's arms, and then severed its body with a swing of my sword. But they weren't down for the count just yet.

Then I faced toward a ghoul that entered from my left while I was fighting the other two. I wielded my blade on my shoulder, casting 'Lightshot' from the tip of my blade, extinguishing the ghoul behind me. The ghoul before me came slashing at me with its claws, and with a flick of my magic and the swing of my blade, I extinguished the ghoul to my right, and severed the ghoul to my left. And the ghouls did not stand up again.

Was that good? Normally, it'd be impossible to show my back to an opponent I couldn't cut, but with magic, I could kill my opponent, and wield my sword to face another at the same time.

Like this, I fought the ghouls while combining my magic and my marital arts, honing my abilities as I did. From time to time, I would also get advice from Shiva-san during the fight.

After 20 minutes of continued fighting, we finally finished killing all of the undead.

Chapter 31

With the ghouls and the zombies gone, we were able to freely go down the spiral staircase. We still did meet a few along the way, but there were mostly none.

When we finally got down to the execution grounds of starvation, we were greeted by a wide, empty area. The only things in there were the mossy surfaces, the glossless black grass growing directly in front above, and the Eternal Darkness that Remiri-san and I needed.

"There's a lot of Eternal Darkness growing here, huh?" [Remiri]
"Well, there's not a lot of people who would come here to gather them." [Shiva]
"How's the quality?" [Rheinbach]

I walked near the herbs, and checked the quality, and I found out that the quality was almost first-class.

"It's pretty good. I can make use of this." [Ryouma]
"Same, but I do want to pick out the ones that haven't been stepped on by the undead." [Remiri]
"There're so many. I'm sure we'll find something as look as we look." [Sebasu]

Like that, we started looking for Eternal Darkness that hasn't been stepped on. But as we were looking for and gathering the herbs, I suddenly felt a strange sensation.

"Mn?" [Ryouma]
"What's wrong?" [Shiva]
"Ah, no… It's nothing. Must've been my imagination." [Ryouma]

I wasn't sure what it was that I felt, and after a few moments, I started to doubt if I had even felt anything, so I didn't bother to mention it anymore.

"If there's really nothing, then it's fine, but say something when something is wrong, alright? [Rheinbach]
"Alright." [Ryouma]

After that, we continued gathering Eternal Darkness, but I didn't feel that strange sensation again. But then just as we were about to fill all five of the bags we prepared beforehand with Eternal Darkness, I felt that sensation again. This time though, it was much clearer.

"Guys…" [Ryouma]
"What's wrong?" [Shiva]
"Did something happen" [Remiri]
"Something the matter?" [Sebasu]
"Is something the matter? Wasn't there something worrying you just a while ago too?" [Rheinbach]

Whispering, I said,

"I can't say for certain what it is, but didn't you guys feel something?" [Ryouma]
"Something? That's a bit too vague, but no." [Remiri]
"There're no undead either…" [Rheinbach]

No one else felt anything, but since they believed me, we searched the area anyway.

In the end, although I still didn't know what that something was, I did find where it was coming from.

"I think it's somewhere around here. That weird sensation is coming from the ground here. [Ryouma]
"Here?" [Shiva]

Going over to a corner of the execution grounds, away from the spiral staircase, was a completely normal area. Absolutely nothing amiss. But it didn't change the fact that that strange feeling I've been having since a while ago was coming from here.

I'm not sure either why I think so, but it feels really disgusting.

"I want to dig around here, is it ok?" [Ryouma]
"It's not illegal." [Sebasu]

I grabbed my iron slime sword, and ordered it to transform into a big shovel. Then cladding it in the 'Break Rock' spell, I dug the ground.

As I dug, the sensation grew stronger and stronger.

What is this? It doesn't feel bad, but it doesn't feel good either. It's not the presence of a living being either. It's something unknown, something I can't understand. And it's getting stronger. And the stronger it got, the more I became sure of its position.

After digging 4m down the ground, my body was completely fitted into the hole.

"Ryouma-kun, are you ok?" [Rheinbach]
"You've dug a lot, but what exactly is going on?" [Remiri]
"I'm getting closer, I know i—— Ah!?" [Ryouma]
"What's wrong!?" [Shiva]
"Ah, no, I think I came hit something." [Ryouma]

Shiva screamed out when I suddenly screamed. And so I told him that I was fine, and then I looked over to the area where I hit something.

"Could this be… A magic jewel?" [Ryouma]

There, in front of me, was the same magic jewel that we saw underneath the elder treant before. A jewel as big as two of my fingers with the attribute of darkness. After using 'Identify' on it, I found out that my conjecture was correct.

Apparently, the tip of my shove. hit this. And there are even more magic stones around the area I hit. Cladding my shovel in the 'Break Rock' spell, the ground broke, and more magical jewels fell. I even got one bigger than what I got just now. Is this what I sensed? In any case, I should report this.

"I found magic jewels! Dark attribute magic jewels!" [Ryouma]

As I said that, I passed to Sebasu-san a magic jewel. Sebasu-san used 'Identify', and with praise in his voice, he said,

"There's no doubt about it. This is definitely a first grade dark attribute magic jewel." [Sebasu]

The others made a fuss when they heard that. I didn't know it was first grade though. My 'Identify' couldn't tell me that much. Since it's first grade, the quality's probably good. But I wonder what the difference is.

Curious, I asked them what the difference was, and I found out that magic jewels are divided into three classes. 1st class, 2nd class, and 3rd class. And within those three classes are 6 different grades.

The attributes within the 1st class are: Light, Electricity, and Wood.
For 2nd class: Dark, Poison, Ice
For 3rd class: Fire, Water, Wind, Earth, Neutral

This division was decided based on the rarity of the magic jewels. Since the 1st class stones are the rarest, they are the most expensive. And naturally, the 2nd and 3rd classes are cheaper. As for dimension magic, no magic jewel has ever been seen imbued with its attribute, so it wasn't included into the division.

Also, the prices of the magic jewel in the same division increase according to grade.

Using the 3rd Class as an example:
1st Grade = over 32,000 suits
2nd Grade = over 16,000 suits
3rd Grade = over 8,000 suits
4th Grade = over 4,000 suits
5th Grade = over 2,000 suits
6th Grade = less than 2,000 suits

The 5th grade is the lowest grade that can be used for staves. The 6th grade is the cheapest and can be bought even by the masses. Causing it to be commonly used in operating magic tools. Like a battery in other words.

There are some 5th grade wands that have 6th grade stones mixed with them during manufacturing, but the 6th grade is generally considered trash.

Next is the 2nd class. This class is rarer than the 3rd class, so they're three times more expensive. But that doesn't mean that as long as one is 2nd class it has to be more expensive than 3rd class.

The prices are as follows:
1st Grade = over 96,000 suits
2nd Grade = over 48,000 suits
3rd Grade = over 24,000 suits
4th Grade = over 12,000 suits
5th Grade = over 6,000 suits
6th Grade = less than 6,000 suits

As can be inferred from these prices, a 3rd class magic jewel can be more expensive than a 2nd class magic jewel depending on the grade.

But in our case…

"Umm… This magic jewel has the dark attribute. A 2nd class magic jewel under the 1st grade. Both the attribute and the quality are good, so it should sell well, right?" [Ryouma]
"Yes, it is exactly as Ryouma-sama has said. Magic jewels are luxurious, but difficult to find. So these jewels can be sold to craftsmen and magicians. Quality and grade on this level are rarely found though, so as long as these stones are sold in the right place, they should sell for two or three times more than the normal price." [Sebasu]

2 or 3 times those prices just now!? But just rounding one of those to 100,000 suits would already get you a big gold coin! And 2 to 3 times of that!?

"Umm… Sebasu-san?" [Ryouma]
"What is it?" [Sebasu]
"There's actually a lot more of those down here." [Ryouma]

When they heard that, they were shocked. And so we decided to dig out all the jewels we could.

Opening my 'Dimension Home', I had the earth slimes and dark slimes help as well. I originally intended of only using the earth slimes, but the dark slimes wanted to go out as well, so I let them. The dark slimes apparently wanted to absorb the magic power in the area.

I do feed the slimes with my own magic power in different attributes, but that amount is realy no more than a snack to them. So they still need a natural source to feed from. And this place here is a great place to feed from.

As we dug, I had the earth slime use their magic to dig, while the dark slimes gathered the earth, and I transported it away. The other four who were outside of the hole would then use 'Identify' on the magic jewels.

After digging, our haul totaled to 22 dark magic jewels. But then suddenly, that sensation that I'd forgotten came rushing back.

"Tch! …" [Ryouma]

Immediately, I used earth magic, dug a hole. What I saw was ——

"This magic jewel is… huge." [Ryouma]

What I found was an absurdly giant magical jewel, hidden behind various sizes of pillar shaped magical jewels. That magical jewel had a height of around 60cm.

"!?"

When I saw that I tried to touch it. But then a chill wrapped around my body, forcing me to immediately jump back, drenched in sweat.

What is this? Is this stone dangerous?

"Ryouma-chan? Did something happen? Eh? Wow, you're seriously sweating! What's wrong!?" [Remiri]

Yelled Remiri-san as she used light magic from above the hole.

"I found a really huge magic jewel just now. But when I tried to touch it, I felt that strange, disgusting sensation." [Ryouma]
"Ryouma-chan, can you get back up here for a bit." [Remiri]

They told me to go up, but I was really concerned about that stone. But when I remembered that chill I felt, I shook the thought away. And I left the hole along with my slimes. As soon as I got out, Remiri-san aimed her wand at me, and chanted,

"'Dispel'" [Remiri]

When she used 'Dispel', I suddenly felt better. Did I get cursed?

"As I thought. I forgot because it doesn't normally happen. But when digging for dark magic jewels, accidents sometimes happen. The dark attribute, after all, attacks mentally and indirectly." [Remiri

So that's how it is… That was dangerous. What would've happened if I was alone?

"You saved me. Thank you, Remiri-san." [Ryouma]
"It's fine. I'll teach you how to deal with curses properly later. Just rest for now. Onee-chan will take care of that magic jewel down there." [Remiri]

Said Remiri-san as she rubbed my haed. Then she jumped down the hole.

"Here's some water, Ryouma-sama." [Sebasu]

Then right after, Sebasu-san gave me a glass full of water and a towel from his 'Item Box'.

"Thank you very much." [Ryouma]

Using those, I wiped my seat, and quenched my thirst. Around the same time, light flashed down the hole, and after a few seconds, Remiri-san came out.

"Remiri, how was it?" [Rheinbach]

Asked Rheinbach-sama, to which Remiri-san replied with her eyes sparklilng,

"It was amazing! It was cursed too, but just as Ryouma-chan said, it was a magic gem!" [Remiri]

Magic gem? Isn't that the same thing as the ruby in the necklace Elia lent me? It should be a super luxurious item.

As I thought that, Remiri-san asked me for help to get the stone.

We went down the hole again, and after taking a better look at it, I saw that it was a large cluster of black crystals. I've seen a crystal cluster before in the waiting room of a client company, but I've never seen anything this big. I wonder why I didn't notice what it was a while ago? I guess my observational skills must've gotten poorer.

This is quite the luxury though… I wonder if it'd be too much to use it as decoration for the house? Hmmm… I kind of want it.

But although it's been dispelled already, I still kind of don't want to touch it. Because of that, I used 'Create Block', and I turned the earth surrounding to the cluster into one giant block.

I then ordered the earth slimes to widen the path, and then using Qi Gong, I carried the block out of the hole.

Outside the hole, I used 'Break Rock' to break the earth surrounding the cluster. And out came that large black crystal. When everyone saw it, everyone except me and Remiri-san was speechless.

Not only was this crystal a magic gem, it was also of the dark attribute with good quality. It was also big, so it'll definitely sell for hundreds of times the normal price.

As for how much, I don't know for sure. The price is just that big. Selling it would probably cost a commotion too, so I probably shouldn't sell it. Let's just leave it at home.

As I was thinking that to myself, Remiri-san asked me.

"Ryouma-chan, can you give me this magic gem?" [Remiri]
"Eh, this?" [Ryouma]

I thought of refusing her right away, but then I remembered that strange feeling I felt before. Huh? Then again why did I want to refuse her? If I sold it, it would make a huge commotion, and Remiri-san didn't even say she was asking it for free… I'm not so attached to it that I'd refuse without even asking either, but… Maybe I actually want it deep inside. Well the again it is a luxurious object, can't blame me, right?

As I was thinking that to myself, Remiri-san panicked, and quickly added,

"W-Wait Ryouma-chan, you don't have to worry about it that much. You should actually be refusing me here, you know?" [Remiri]
"Eh?" [Ryouma]
"Sheesh… I wouldn't actually ask you to just give something like this away. Rheinbach-chan told me you didn't really care much for money, so I just wanted to test it is all. You don't have to worry so much." [Remiri]

Oh, she wasn't serious.

"Ah, so it was a joke." [Ryouma]
"Naturally. This crystal here is a huge fortune. It would have been normal to just refuse outright. And you can't get a lot of money out of this either, unless you negotiate seriously, Ryouma-chan. But instead, you suddenly started to worry for real…

We're adventurers, so it can't be helped if disputes come out during times like these… If you're like that, you'll make me worry that you'll get scammed somewhere." [Remiri]

It's true that I don't care much for money, but I don't think it's to the point where I would be swindled.

"In any case, Ryouma-chan was the one who dug these magic gem and magic jewels out, so it's yours." [Remiri]
"Ah… The magic gem aside ,let's share the magic jewels." [Ryouma]

They did come with me after all, and they even taught me various things, and even looked after me, so they do have some right to it, right?

"Hmm… Then in that case, we'll each take one. Any more than that is too much." [Rheinbach]

Said Rheinbach-sama as he took out his own portion from the bag containing the magic jewels. The others also took theirs, and Remiri-san happily embraced me.

Remiri-san is apparently going to be using it for her new wand. There, I suddenly remembered the branch of the elder treant, so I took a branch and gave it to her. Remiri-san became even happier, and she hugged me even tighter.

It was almost as rough as last night, but at the same time, I was also a little happy.

After that, with nothing else left do to in the area, we left with the Eternal Darkness (herbs) and magic jewels in the 'Dimension Home'. As for the magic gem, I turned it into a block again with 'Create Block', and then hid it in my 'Item Box'. And so, we decided to spend another night outside the labyrinth, and then make our way home.

Chapter 32

"Ryouma-kun, how's your magic power?" [Rheinbach]
"I spent much fighting, but I've already recovered 90% of it. It seems like it's recovering faster than normal though." [Ryouma]

There, Remiri-san explained why.

"Breathing the air or eating food which both contain magic power will instill the magic power found in those things within your body, quickly increasing the speed of your magic's recovery. And right now, we're here right next to a labyrinth which contains much magic power. So the recovery rate of magic power here is faster than other areas. There are wizards who intentionally go to labyrinths for the recovery bonus, so they can train faster." [Remiri]

I see, so that's how it is.

"Ryouma-chan, are you going to practice after eating? You've already recovered your magic power, so I think you could, but then again, you must be tired from the curse…" [Remiri]
"I'll train. I've fully understood from the recent incident just how important anti-curse spells are. So please teach me, Remiri-san." [Ryouma]
"Really? Well, alright. Let's start with the light magic, 'Dispel'." [Remiri]

After eating, Remiri-san picked up a nearby stone, and chanted,

"'Illness'" [Remiri]

At that instant, Remiri-san passed me a stone she clad in magic power.

"Alright, hold this." [Remiri]

I held the stone as she instructed, and my body began to feel feverish. When I removed my hand from the stone, the feverish sensation vanished.

"There are different kinds of curses. The curse afflicted on that stone is Illness. A curse of illness. When afflicted by this curse or when wielding an objected afflicted by this curse, you will experience the same symptoms as the illness imbued in the curse. And unlike normal illnesses, you won't be able to recover from it with medicine." [Remiri]
"So that's where that feverish sensation was coming from." [Ryouma]
"I started off with a simple curse to make it easy to understand. We'll use that to practice 'Dispel'." [Remiri]

Like this I began the training on 'Dispel' which permeates a target in light attribute magic power to purify the darkness attribute magic power and remove the curse.

The darkness attribute magic power that's used in curses is altered, and is different from the normal darkness attribute magic power. Which is the reason why the magic jewels did not lose the magic power imbued in them when the curse was lifted from them.

I practiced by recalling the sensation I felt when 'Dispel' was used on me back in the execution grounds of starvation. The result: I failed 8 times, and succeeded on the 9th try.

The next spell I was taught is the light magic, 'Anti-Curse'. It's a spell that creates a barrier around the body to protect from curses. I also succeeded at using this spell with the concept of magic battle technique.

Then in order to find out just how much I am able to defend against curses with the 'Anti-Curse' spell, Remiri-san casted curses at me with increasing intensity until I was able to understand my limits.

As a result, I found out that my 'Anti-Curse' wasn't very strong. It immediately broke as soon as a slightly stronger curse was casted.

Thanks to my mental resistance and physical pain resistance though, I can actually endure quite a bit even after being afflicted with a curse. It seems I'll be able to cast 'Dispel' on myself to remove curses afflicted on my body. The only problem is the fact that I'll be left defenseless while I'm doing so. My defense against curses are weak too, so it's bit worrying. A situation where a strong curse that I can't defend is casted on me

won't be pretty.

There, Remiri-san suggested,

"If you're that worried, you could try looking for a magic tool." [Remiri]
"A magic tool?" [Ryouma]
"Right, a magic tool. Amongst magic tools there's one that's imbued with the 'Anti-Curse' spell. Unfortunately, people who make magic armaments imbued with curse resist spells are rare, so it'll probably be a challenge to find. You'll probably have to spend a pretty penny too." [Remiri]

Then Remiri-san jokingly added, it's because the hated nobles keep gathering those craftsmen.

I see… If I find one, I should buy it. But for the meantime, I should keep training at it until I'm good enough to defend myself.

With that conclusion we went on to the next magic. But Remiri-san was starting to get low on magic power, so we changed the subject from curses to the other spell that Remiri-san used before, 'Hide'. We'll study on curses again tomorrow.

The dark magic, 'Hide', is a spell that creates a barrier around one's surrounding with darkness attribute magic power. That magic power is able to isolate one's presence. It could also suck the surrounding area to blur one's image.

This spell's relatively easy to learn, and I was able to learn it by my fourth try. I decided the spell was good enough when Shiva-san, who was watching us train, told me he couldn't feel my presence anymore.

Incidentally, Shiva-san had a match with five of my king scavengers just a while ago. The labyrinth search was too easy, so Shiva-san was feeling unsatisfied. And so he requested to train with the king scavenger slimes. Shiva-san thought it'd be good practice with the slimes' physical attack resistance and 'Enlarge' and with all five of them attacking at the same time.

As for me, I thought it'd be a good way to get experience for the slimes as well, so I happily agreed.

As I was thinking that, a zombie came out of the labyrinth. Then looking at the setting sun, I thought to myself, Oh, it's already time for the zombies to come out, huh? And so I thought to feed the scavenger slimes and have them split. I need to increase the scavenger slimes' number in order to find out whether there're still any more after King or not after all.

But I also want to leave some magic power for my training… so I decided to let only a hundred split today.

And so, I had a king scavenger slime split. And I had 100 scavenger slimes feed on the zombies. The scavenger slimes immediately chased after the zombies, and the zombies were annihilated.

After that, I gave the OK for the slimes to attack the zombies coming out of the labyrinth as well. And I spent the rest of time with the others, drinking tea as we chatted. A little later, 19 scavenger slimes entered the 'Holy Space'.

As I was wondering why, the slimes suddenly began to evolve. Apparently, they wanted a place where they could evolve safely.

The slimes began to release and absorb magic power repeatedly as usual, but unlike before, the amount of magic power they released was greater than other evolutions. At first I thought it was just because there were 19 of them evolving at the same time. But after looking at them closely, the amount of magic power was greater even individually speaking.

Shiva-san and Remiri-san gazed at the slimes with interest with me until the slimes finished evolving. Apparently, it's their first time seeing a slime evolve.

This is something I heard from Robelia-san, but apparently, slimes won't evolve unless they are at place where there're no enemies, and they feel that they're safe. So there're actually little opportunities for people aside from researchers to see slimes evolve.

As I recalled that to myself, the slimes finished evolving. The slimes' bodies have turned into the hue of blackish dirt, and their bodies were considerably bigger compared to other slimes, having a diameter of 60cm. A perfect height for sitting. Not that I'm going to sit on them though.

I used 'Identify' on one of the slimes, and I found out that they're called, 'Glaive Slime'.

Glaive slime… that weapon that's like a spear or halberd? But why? Is what I was thinking, but then after looking at their skills, I realized I was mistaken.

Glaive Slime

Skills

- Attract Ghosts Lv1
- Absorb Ghosts Lv3
- Enshrine Remains Lv3
- Disease Resistance Lv7
- Poison Resistance Lv7
- Eat Filth Lv6
- Cleaning Lv2
- Deodorize Lv7
- Physical Resistance Lv2
- Jump Lv3
- Digestion Lv7
- Absorb Lv3
- Split Lv2
- Taijutsu Lv2

Attract Ghosts, Absorb Ghosts, Enshrine Remains… Could it be, it's referring to graves?

Come to think of it, grave is also written in English as グレイブ (Grave/Glaive). In any case, the cleaning skill seems to have gone down in level, and the deodorization liquid skill has vanished. In exchange, the slimes learned those three new skills related to graves. It's good that they didn't lose the skill they learned from my training though.

After that, I took a look at what attributes they liked, and they liked earth and darkness first, followed by dimension… Dimension!?

Well, that's a surprise. It's my first time seeing a slime that likes the dimension attribute.

I've tried feeding slimes with dimension attribute magic power all this time to no effect, but with this… Maybe, just maybe, it might be possible to bring out a slime that can use dimension magic!

Then while I was caught up in my own thoughts, Rheinbach-sama asked,

"What kind of slime is it this time?" [Rheinbach]
"Grave Slime." [Ryouma]

Apparently, no one's heard of it yet. A new type it seems.

Since there was no information whatsoever, I decided to try out their new skills. But before everything else, I had the scavenger slimes that were feasting on the undead come back first. I then found that 10 were eligible for splitting, so I had them split, and then I contracted them.

After that came the testing of the skills. When I had the grave slimes use the 'Attract Ghosts' skill, the grave slimes' body faintly turned pale blue as they shone an obscure light. The undead outside the holy space suddenly started approaching us.

Then with the activation of the 'Absorb Ghosts' skill, the slimes took the gathered undead into their bodies. And over half of the undead meekly allowed themselves to be swallowed. It's different compared to when the scavengers were fighting. During that time the undead were resisting and fighting… Could this be the grave slimes' ability? Looking at the undead closely, there were also those that were heading on their own volition to be swallowed.

Regarding the last skill, 'Enshrine Remains', it apparently allows the slime to hide an undead body into their body without letting it rot. The slime can then expulse the undead from its body any time.

"A slime that catches undead… How strange." [Remiri]
"It's convenient for hunting undead. You can gather the undead in one area, and finish them off in one gulp. If there're too many, then you could just imprison them within the slimes, and then gradually whittle them down." [Shiva]
"It can also be used to tame undead-type magical beasts." [Rheinbach]

The others gave their own opinions about the grave slimes, but it was Rheinbach-sama's comment that piqued my curiosity.

"Undead can also be tamed?" [Ryouma]
"Of course. The undead are splendid magical beasts. Only… They're not well liked, so there are no slave magic users that use them. Their regeneration is great, but the problem is that they're too eerie." [Rheinbach]
"There's also the odor from zombies and ghouls. And they're also weaker during the day, so there's some downside in using them." [Sebasu]
"The undead can't stay at an inn too, so they won't be able to enter towns." [Remiri]
"Now that you mention it, there's definitely plenty of reason for them to be unpopular." [Ryouma]
"Right? Because of that, the only ones that employ undead-type into their service are researchers and slave magic users that don't have any affinity for anything else but undead-type magical beasts. Because of that, there're barely any that use undead." [Shiva]

I guess the undead researchers are next to the slime researchers in terms of misfortune.

I wonder what those researchers would think were they to know that there's a slime like this. You could just have the undead enter the grave slimes when it's inconvenient… And there's also the 'Deodorization' skill, so doesn't this solve the problem?

I decided to tame an undead to prove my hypothesis. There were already a number of undead nearby because of the grave slimes, so I just contracted one of those, and――

Buchi!!

"What was that just now?" [Remiri]
"What happened?" [Shiva]
"I just thought I'd try contracting zombie, but for some reason, it felt different than normal… It felt like the magic power line wouldn't connect. Like it was being rejected…" [Ryouma]

It probably just failed, but it felt like a phone that was cut violently.

"Well, you could've just failed because it's your first time. You might also just have poor affinity for zombies, so why don't you try with other undead?" [Rheinbach]

Just as Rheinbach suggested, I tried contracting with skeletons and wraiths, but it was all the same. Apparently, my affinity for undead-type magical beasts is really bad.

The grave slimes being able to go in and out holy space is because they're not undead, but I wonder what would happen if I had an undead-type slime.

While I was thinking that, I decided to retire for the day. We didn't need to thin out the undead today, so I went inside my 'Dimension Home', and slept by myself.

The next day.

I readied myself, and then I went out of my 'Dimension Home'.
And first thing in the morning, I received Remiri-san's lecture on dark magic.

First was how to afflict curses, and after that was how to defend against curses.

The curse and defense against it that I learned were 'Curse Transfer' and 'Return Curse'.

'Cast Transfer' isn't a spell for releasing curses. Instead, it's a spell that transfers a curse to remove the effect on the target. 'Return Curse' is a spell that protects the body, and returns the curse to the person that casted it. They're both ways of dealing with curses, but they're very different from each other.

When morning training ended, we were to go home, but…

Right now, we're riding on the back of a reddish-brown, western dragon with a length of 50m from its head to its tail.

This dragon is Rheinbach-sama's slave demon. It's of the Ignis Dragon variety. It can breathe out fire, and generally lives in volcanoes. But it can live anywhere else too as long as it's not cold.

It's been decided that we'll be going home on the back of this dragon. As for me, I'll be dropped by somewhere close to Gimuru.

Apparently, they were originally planning to use the dragon to get to the labyrinth, but then they met me, and so they didn't use it in order to buy time for my lessons. It also worked out well, as the walk going there was good experience for me.

They actually went out of their way to walk through that ravine just to teach me, I'm really grateful.

"Are you ready? Hold tight!" [Rheinbach]
"Yes!" [Ryouma]

We sat on what appeared to be a saddle on the back of the dragon, and hung onto the handles that were affixed to its body with metals. The dragon spread its giant wings, and it ran as it flapped them. Then it took off with great vigor.

"Wow…" [Ryouma]

It's my first time flying since coming to this world. I've traveled many times on air before in my previous life, but this is a completely different experience. The rumbling strong wind blew past me, forcing my eyes to a slit as I did my best to resist its pressure. And gradually, the labyrinth down below became smaller and smaller as the great ravine filled my vision.

This dragon was quite terrifying when it was first summoned. I actually sweated a bit, wondering what was going to happen. But now that I'm riding on it, I have to say, it's not bad. It flies safely, and the ride is comfortable too.

Rheinbach-sama did tell me beforehand that it's safe, but the dragon's menacing posture when it was summoned was a considerable pressure. My body froze in fear, and I couldn't move an inch. I'd hate to actually make an enemy with one of these. Its claws are sharp, and its tail is thick like a log. Every single one of its attacks probably contains a force strong enough to kill in one hit. I'll make a note to remind me to run if I ever meet one of these out in the wild.

After all, just because a magical beast has the same rank as another, doesn't mean that they're the same on the danger scale. The Ignis Dragons are A Ranked requests when put up, but they can also be S Rank depending on the situation. You could say that the Ignis Dragons are at the summit of A Rank magical beasts. I'd really rather not fight with one, unless I have to.

The labyrinth grew farther and farther as I quietly thought those things to myself. With this, my first labyrinth search and the training I needed for the Great Forest of Shurus has both come to an end.

Chapter 33

2 days later.

"Thank you very much, everyone." [Ryouma]
"Stay in good health." [Shiva]
"Take care of your body." [Rheinbach]
"I pray for your safe trip." [Sebasu]
"Let's meet again~" [Remiri]

With Rheinbach-sama's dragon, the trip that should've taken a month took us only two days. I was dropped off near Gimuru. I gave my thanks to Rheinbach-sama and the others, and then we went our separate ways. Like that I returned to Gimuru.

I learned a lot of magic in these past two days as well. It was a fruitful trip.

When I passed through the city gates, the first place I headed to wasn't my store, but the church.

Actually, there's something that's been bugging me these past two days. I can't tell for sure what it is. But because of it I've been thinking so much, and I haven't gotten much sleep lately. Most of it is about my current strength, my current fighting style, and actually using the magic gem that I keep hesitating to use. It's mostly just a repetition of these things.

For a moment I thought I was cursed, so I tried using dispel and anti-curse, but nothing changed. I might have simply been traumatized after being afflicted with a curse such that I don't want to touch it again. But regardless, it sure feels disgusting.

Because of that, I thought of consulting with Gayn and the others. And now, I'm headed to the church.

Ah, but before that, I should put away my armor and weapons into my 'Dimension Home'. It wouldn't be right to go into the church with those after all.

As usual, the nuns, Riera-san and Bell-san, were standing by the gate of the church. I've been helping out with the children's training, and have also been going to the church for personal reasons frequently, so I'm well acquainted with them. After I greeted them, I quickly headed to the chapel.

There were already people praying in the chapel by the time I got there. So I quietly entered the chapel so as not to disturb them. Then I sat by a corner, and prayed.

The usual light filled my vision, and my consciousness was taken to the divine realm. Before me was Gayn, Kufo, and Rurutia.

The gods no longer found it surprising for me to visit them, but the atmosphere about them this time was different.

Normally, they would welcome me with warm smiles, but this time, they're looking at me with suspicion.

I don't know if I did something wrong, but they're not talking to me. If this keeps up, we'll just end up wasting time.

With that, I decided to break the silence myself.

"Gayn, Kufo, Rurutia, I know I suddenly came, but I wanted to ask you guys something." [Ryouma]
"Ah, right… That's fine, but there's also something we want to ask you." [Rurutia]
"Ryouma-kun, did you do something strange? You're different from usual." [Kufo]

I don't really think I'm acting any different than normal, but something strange did happen.

"What you want to know is probably the same as what I want to talk to you about." [Ryouma]
"Then let's hear what you have to say first." [Gayn]

At Gayn's urging, I opened my 'Item Box', and brought out the stone that the magic gem was in.

I was thinking of all sorts, trying to make out what Gayn and the others were talking about a while ago, but as soon as they saw the magic gem, their expressions turned grim.

"Ryouma-kun, you should hand that over to us." [Gayn]

Gayn spoke in a heavy voice I've never heard before. I nervously handed the magic gem to him. Gayn waved his hand, and the magic gem floated toward his hands. The three gods surrounded the magic gem.

"Sorry, but just wait for a sec." [Rurutia]

Rurutia spoke in a gentle manner, but she was clearly too busy to bother herself with me right now. I couldn't do anything else but stay quiet as the three gods fiddled with the magic gem.

The three gods caused the stone the magic gem was in to crumble, revealing the magic gem in its full glory. Their expression turned even grimmer. Then they stretched out the palm of their hands toward the magic gem. In the next moment, light shone from their hands. And it wrapped itself around the magic gem completely, turning it into a ball of light.

I couldn't tell at all what they were doing, but the three gods breathed a sigh of relief as they finished wrapping the magic gem in light. It must have been hard work.

That guess was proven true as the gods began to talk amongst themselves. Then suddenly, Kufo and Rurutia disappeared along with the ball of light.

Then Gayn, who was the only one remaining, turned toward me, and his face quickly changed from that grim expression to a troubled one.

"Ryouma-kun, you've done well. It's a good thing that you were able to bring that thing to us." [Gayn]

Those words left me confused.

All I did was come here to ask about something I felt was off from the people I consider to be the most knowledgeable. I didn't expect to be thanked at all. And since the gods themselves are thanking me, that magic gem must have been something really dangerous.

Cold sweat permeated my back as I realized that fact.

"Exactly what was that?" [Ryouma]

Gayn hesitated for a bit, but in the end, he answered.

"If I were to put it in simple words…" [Gayn]
"In simple words it's?" [Ryouma
"A god." [Gayn]

The shock from that answer petrified me.

What? What did he say just now? A god?

"I'll say this now, but I don't mean paper or hair, alright? God, as in god. Someone like us." [Gayn]

Seriously!?

"Why has a god been turned into a magic gem and buried in a labyrinth?" [Ryouma]
"The explanation will be a bit long…" [Gayn]

After that, Gayn explained.

First, it's a fact that the magic gem I brought here is the demon king that attacked the world in the past.

Gods and demon kings are actually both gods. Demon kings or devils are merely gods who have broken the rules, and have decided to invade the world of other gods. Being called a demon king or a devil is merely for the sake of distinction. It's no different from humans calling humans who have committed a crime, criminals.

Moreover, the demon king Gayn is referring to is actually a god who has been managing a world that's been

around since the beginning of the civilization of this world. But his world advanced too much, and when a war broke out, his world was ruined beyond repair. That god lost his world. Gods and worlds are two yet one being at the same time. Once a god loses the world he rules, his existence will gradually fade until it is no longer able to maintain itself, causing it to shatter into nothingness. The only way out is to have a new world.

A normal god would use their own power to create a new world, and then become its god. But in doing so, that god will lose most of its power.

A normal god will regain its power after the passing of some billion years once the world begins to develop. Which is why there are gods that endure the loss of power and give birth to new worlds. But there are cases, rare they may be, where a god, just like the aforementioned demon king, refuses to create their own world, and instead attempts to steal the world of another god.

"I understand the situation now, but I don't recall being told that you defeated the demon king. Although I do feel like I've heard of that story when I came to this world." [Ryouma]
"Wasn't it when we told you that we don't interfere with the world much? And we didn't defeat the demon king. We just went out and drove him away. And I've mentioned this before, but that god has been a god since the beginnings of this world. A god's power grows as his world progresses. That god is in a different league compared to us. He might have gotten weaker from losing his world, but driving him away was the most we could do." [Gayn]

So that's how it is…

"Then did that demon king come to invade this world again?" [Ryouma]
"No, that thing's just a nasty souvenir. A fragment of the demon king. He purposely sealed a portion of his own power and will, and hid it a place full of magic power that we couldn't find. In time, the black crystal produced by that area was filled with that power and influence of the demon king, turning that crystal into a magic gem.

But while it might contain the thoughts and powers of the demon king, it's still a magic gem. But since we didn't know where it was, if it were not for you finding it, after the passing of some tens of thousands of years, a powerful magical beast might be born. In the worst case, a demon king might be born." [Gayn]

Tens of thousands of years… that's a long time… In any case, I get that that crystal isn't any good news. But rather than that, I'm more worried about…

"There were some magic jewels along with that magic gem… Are those safe?" [Ryouma]
"Those're fine. We checked it a while ago, and the jewels your friends are carrying are just magic jewels. The jewels they're carrying are just the solidification of the magic power gathered by the fragment of the demon king." [Gayn]
"I see… That's good to hear." [Ryouma]
"Rather than worrying about them, the real problem is actually you." [Gayn]

Me? Is something the matter?

"It might be weaker than the actual thing, but it is still a fragment of the demon king. The negative influence you received from carrying it isn't something to scoff at. In fact, you received enough influence for four people's worth." [Gayn]
"Eh!? Will everything be fine!?" [Ryouma]

Shocked, I yelled that out in surprise as I checked my own body.

"Don't worry, it's nothing so serious. You wanted that magic gem, right? And when you had it with you, you wanted to use it, right?" [Gayn]

I did. Before I found that magic gem, for some reason, I knew that there was something there. And as if I was being guided, I dug the ground, and as soon as I found it, I took it. If it wasn't for that strange sensation, I would have undoubtedly immediately recovered it, and would have fiddled with it in my magic experiments. [Ryouma]

"Yes… I guess it really wasn't something good." [Ryouma]
"Well, it is a portion of a demon king's power. Also, it would appear that a curse was put on it to mentally attack whoever found it before its activation. And the curse was made to pollute the mind even further if the person tries to keep it for an extended period. And were you to have used it, your mind would have become more vulnerable to the pollution.

You possess a high level of mental pain resistance skill and recently, you even gained the charm resistance

skill. On top of that, you even contained the fragment with your earth magic, so you were able to minimize contact with the fragment. Yet despite all that, the moment you set foot in the realm, we knew that there was something strange about you.

You learned how to dispel curses from that magician named Remiri, and it seems you tried dispelling the curse several times yourself. But all that can do at most is stabilize your condition temporarily, it can't get rid of the main cause which is the power of a god. Because of that you couldn't remove the curse." [Gayn]
"……" [Ryouma]

What is that? That's scary. I'm drenched in cold sweat. Am I in danger?

As I thought that to myself, Gayn served me tea from out of nowhere as he told me not to worry. Also, after listening to Gayn, apparently my situation isn't hopeless. The negative influence I received is a bit troubling, but it's nothing the power of a god can't remove. It's not a problem they can ignore either as gods, so they're going to remove the curse.

Speaking of which, the chills I felt when I found the magic gem are because of Kufo's divine protection.

The divine protection of the god of life has the effect of letting its receiver know where danger is via instinct. Moreover, as the ability to sense danger is merely an extra, it also improves the receiver's weakest ability to sense danger.

For example, a person who tends to eat anything as soon as he sees it when he is hungry will become able to perceive when the food before him is bad. A person who tends to find himself in dangerous places will gain the ability to sense when the direction he is going in is dangerous.

In my case, the ability I gained is related to dealing with people. It works both for humans or for things that possess a certain level of intelligence. And my ability works such that I can sense whenever that person or something feels some sort of hate for me. Hearing that reminded me of Matthew and the boss of that fang group whose name I can't remember. Back then, I thought it was just because they were similar to my superiors back in my previous life, but apparently that was actually due to the effect of the divine protection.

The chills I felt from the fragment of the demon king is because of the malice in the demon king's will. If it wasn't for that chill, things might've become more dangerous for me.

"You're really unlucky though… I even bettered your luck with my divine protection and power, and yet…" [Gayn]
"Really? I thought I've been quite lucky since coming to this world though." [Ryouma]
"You found a fragment of a demon king that's normally hidden and caught his attention, you know? I don't know anyone unluckier than that." [Gayn]

My words were cut down in a single stroke. Then it was decided that I'll be sleeping while the influence is removed from me. It's sort of like anesthesia.

"Alright, let's start. Just relax." [Gayn]

I lied down on the bench that Gayn brought out, and relaxed. A fog gradually covered my thoughts until eventually my consciousness faded.

I don't know how much time had passed, but when I opened my eyes, I saw Gayn's face.

"You're awake?" [Gayn]
"Ahh… Is it done? Eh?" [Ryoum]

My head was a bit hazy, but when I sat up, I noticed that it wasn't only Gayn in the room, but also Kufo, Rurutia, and even Tekun who wasn't there before.

"Tekun, why are you here?" [Ryouma]
"To make Gayn's life easier. I was called here to extend the time you could spend here in this realm." [Tekun]

Ahh! Now that he mentions it, I do have limited time here in this realm.

"I see, thank you." [Ryouma]
"Don't mind it. Here, drink." [Tekun]

Tekun filled a cup with liquor, and passed it to me. Liquor always comes whenever I meet up with Tekun…

"By drink, you mean now?" [Ryouma]
"Just drink it in one gulp." [Tekun]

For the meantime, I took a sip. The moment I drank it, my body felt hot, and immediately after, my body felt refreshed.

"What is this?" [Ryouma]
"Medicinal alcohol. It has the effect of stabilizing one's mind when taken moderately. It's the perfect wine for waking someone sleep like you, right?" [Tekun]
"So it's that kind of wine. I certainly do feel like I've woken up." [Ryouma]
"Then, since you're awake now, let me explain." [Gayn]

Gayn joined in on the discussion.

"First things first, I wasn't able to completely remove all of the negative influence now." [Gayn]

Eh!? Then what's going to happen to me?

"Was it no good?" [Ryouma]
"I just wasn't able to remove everything 'now'. I could remove everything, but removing it all in one swoop would put too much burden on your soul, so I didn't.

I put up something to suppress the influence instead. As long as we keep treating the influence just as we did today, eventually, all of the influence will disappear." [Gayn]
"Just look at it as if you're dropping by the hospital to receive treatment. The treatment was done once to buy time and reduce the burden on the soul. You'll receive more treatments later on, and eventually, you'll be bright as new." [Rurutia]

Oh? Then in that case… I guess I'll be ok, right?

You've been doing your best lately to get to Cormi Village, but you've already finished most of your preparations, right? So once you get the inheritance back, settle down at Gimuru for a while, and regularly visit the divine realm. Our free time for vising Earth will also lessen, but drop by the divine realm frequently, so we can treat you." [Kufo]
"Alright. Please take care of me." [Ryouma]

As I said that, all of the sudden, a god appeared before me at point blank.

"Uwaa!? Ah, Fer Noevir-sama." [Ryouma]
"Did I startle you? My apologies." [Fer Noevir]

The person that suddenly appeared before me was the god of magic, Fer Noevir-sama.

"It's been awhile." [Ryouma]
"Awhile? It's only been half a year, no?" [Fer Noevir]
"…Half a year is considered plenty long amongst humans. Not that there's a standard or anything." [Ryouma]
"I see, but enough of that. I came here to give you something that I should hand over to you, or no. Rather, I came here to give you back something. [Fer Noevir]
"Something that should be returned?" [Ryouma]

As I was wondering to myself what the god meant, Fer Noevir-sama made the magic gem that I brought appear.

"…Is that what you mean by something that should be returned?" [Ryouma]
"Precisely." [Fer Noevir]
"Umm… Even if you give it back to me, a demon king's fragment is a bit…" [Ryouma]
"Don't worry, I've already removed the will of the demon king from it. Its quality is abnormally high because of the demon king's influence that it's received for a long time, but it's just a dark attribute magic gem now. And since you were the one who dug it out, you have the right to own it. I suggest using it to make a wand or something.

It's up to you what you want to do with it, but I would advise you not to sell it as it would cause a commotion." [Fer Noevir]

As Fer Noevir-sama said that, he left no room for arguments as he quickly handed to me the magic gem. I stored the magic gem in my 'Item Box'.

There, Tekun turned me by the shoulder, and said,

"Ah, by the way, Ryouma, you don't have a wand, right?" [Tekun]
"Nope, none. I do think it'd be a good idea to have one though." [Ryouma]
"Then the timing couldn't be better! You should use this magic gem to create a wand. And for the wand itself… you have branches of the mutated elder treant with you, right?" [Tekun]

I told Tekun that I hid it away in a corner of my 'Dimension Home', and immediately, Tekun's face turned into a blunt face of dissatisfaction.

"What a waste! Materials are meant to be used. Oh yeah, you have the woodworking skill, right? This here's a good opportunity, so why don't you try making it yourself?" [Tekun]
"Magic wands can be made with woodworking?" [Ryouma]
"The basic stuff, yeah. But for the better ones, you'll need magic perception and the ingredients. But you already have those, right? So if you'd like, I could teach you how when your dropping by to receive your treatment. After all, I am god of art and craft." [Tekun]
"Is that ok?" [Ryouma]
"There's no problem as long as it's just human techniques. All I'm going to be teaching you are the basics of creating a magic wand. From there, it'll be up to you to research and improve on it. Craftsmen all improve through the accumulation of those. And looking after that is my job." [Tekun]

As Tekun said that, he filled a cup with liquor, and drank. Then he said,

"Nothing much really changes whether I support craftsmen directly or indirectly. Actually, from my point of view as a god of craft, I want people to keep creating crafts as much as possible with their own techniques.
"Really?" [Ryouma]
"Well, they went to all the trouble of learning it right? If you're not going to use it, the skills will go to waste. So while I'm not going to ask you to make a living out of crafts, I do want you to keep making them even as a hobby." [Tekun]

Well, it's true it'd be a waste to see something not used. And besides, it's a rare privilege to be taught by the gods directly.

At those thoughts, I decided to make my own wand.

"I understand; I'll do my best." [Ryouma]

Like this, it was decided for me to go to the divine realm regularly for treatment and for guidance from Tekun after I get home from my trip to the Great Forest of Shurus.

TL Note: 神(god read as kami) 紙(paper read as kami) 髪(hair read as kami). These are the words referred to for the puns in that one line.

Chapter 34

After that, our time ran out, and I walked out of the chapel into the town. For the meantime, I'll have no choice but to do as they ordered, so I should go and get the… no, before that, I should check the store first. I should also make the bug repellant with the Eternal Darkness (Herb).

...Although to be honest, I actually just can't get rid of this worry that's tugging at me. If I don't do anything, I'll end up overwhelmed by fear and anxiety for the demon king, so as much as possible I want to distract myself from it.

Gayn also told me that they can remove all of the bad influences to put my mind at ease. They gave me a bunch of reasons to call me over so they can heal me. They were worrying, but they still believed in me, and talked with me. So, since they believed in me, I too should believe in them that they can really remove the evil influence of the demon king and I should just focus on the work I have at hand.

As I decided that, I went over to Digger's Arms Sh op to have the armor that broke in the trip this time, ah, but I guess it'd be more apt to say it broke in my duel with Shiva-san rather than the trip though. In any case, I went to have it repaired.

"Excuse me." [Ryouma]

As I entered the shop, I noticed that there was no one there, so I called out. The store's owner, Darson, then came out.

"Looks like you came back safely." [Darson]
"Thanks to your goods." [Ryouma]
"Did something happen to your armor? We just adjusted it recently though."
"I need it repaired." [Ryouma]
"Repair? Did you run into some trouble?" [Darson]
"The magical beasts didn't pose any problems, but along the way, I met someone. We exchanged pointers, and my armor was ruined." [Ryouma]
"You fought someone strong, huh?" [Darson]
"Yes. I learned just how weak I still am from this last trip." [Ryouma]
"As usual, you're not like a kid at all. Well whatever, show me your armor." [Darson]

Ryouma brought out his armor, and as Darson-san stared at it with a gaze full of interest, he muttered,

"Ho… That guy you fought was pretty good, huh? He used a spear of some sort for his weapon, right? On top of that, he used magic as well." [Darson]
"You can tell?" [Ryouma]
"After being in this trade for such a long time, I've come to learn how to tell things from a glance… I have to say though, that guy you fought with is amazing… There's barely anyone who could pierce through the hard lizard's hide so cleanly, you know? Was he someone famous?" [Darson]
"Yes, his name is Shiva Gardak." [Ryouma]

Of course he's famous, he's the former knight-commander. As I quietly thought that to myself, Darson-san's gaze jumped up from the armor toward me.

"The former knight-commander!? Why were you fighting with a bigwig like that!?" [Darson]
"We met along the way. One thing led to another, and well… we ended up sparring." [Ryouma]
"Right… Well, whatever, if it's the knight-commander, then I guess it makes sense. Anyway, I can repair this thing if you want, but it's cheaper to buy a new one, so… What will it be?" [Darson]

Money isn't really a problem right now.

"Just repair it. It's only been for a year, but I've already gotten quite attached to it." [Ryouma]
"Got it." [Darson]
"Also, the thing I asked you before… How is it?" [Ryouma]
"Oh, right! I finished it as soon as you left the town. I'll bring it out now, just wait for a sec." [Daron]

At those words, Darson-san left and headed for the store's inner rooms.

That 'thing' I'm referring to is the custom armor I asked him to make before. I wondered whether it would be possible to create an armor woven with the sticky slime's high-durability thread, so I asked him to make one.

After waiting for a while, Darson-san came back with a box that was somewhat on the bigger side. Inside that box were a pair of light green shirts, two pairs of pants, and two mantles.

" These here're the finished products. I asked a good friend of mine that works with armors to make these, but I can guarantee their quality. I can hand these to you with confidence." [Darson]

As Darson-san said that, he took a sheet of cloth from the box, and pointed a knife at it.

"Watch." [Darson]

Darson-san tried to cut the cloth several times, but no matter how many times he tried, the blade couldn't pierce through. The cloth could neither be torn nor cut.

"These were created with two pieces of clothing that were woven from the thread you brought. Everything in this box was made like this. It was hard to cut through the cloths, so it took a lot of effort to make, but the result is excellent.

These look like normal clothes from the outside. And though they're meant to be worn beneath an armor, their actual quality is closer to that of a chain mail. It possesses extraordinary defense for inner armor." [Darson]

I took out one of finished products from the box.

"You made the inner part out of silk?" [Ryouma]
"The cloth's durable and it doesn't feel all that bad to touch, but it doesn't absorb water or moisture. So I thought about it, and I decided to create the inner part out of silk." [Darson]
"I see, thank you. With this I won't have problem even if I passed through a grove." [Ryouma]
"A grove? Even wolves or goblins wouldn't be able to pose a problem to you with that." [Darson]
"With these and the repairs, how much is everything?" [Ryouma]
"Hmm… 13 small gold coins." [Darson]

That's actually pretty cheap considering I had it ordered.

"Is that alright? You're repairing my armor too, so…" [Ryouma]
"It just took time to cut those cloths. No special processes were required. Besides, craftsmen love working with strange materials. So 13 small gold coins is enough." [Darson]
"I see, thank you very much." [Ryouma]

I took out a pouch filled with money. And from it, I took out 13 pieces of small gold coins. After I paid the bill, I took the clothes, and went out to town.

Next stop is my store.

When I got to the store, people went in and out like buzzing bees. Busy as always, I thought.

"Good morning–" [Ryouma]
"Ah, Boss, ~Good Morning~" [Maria]
"Mornin', Boss." [Fina]
"Welcome home." [Carm]

Entering through the store's employee-use entrance, I went to the employee's break room. There, Maria-san, Fina-san, and Carm-san greeted me. They looked somewhat startled at my presence.

Every time before I would leave, I would tell them when I planned to leave and when I planned to come back. This last trip was the same. Only, I was supposed to come back a month later, so their surprise is because I came back so quickly.

"I finished my task much earlier than expected, so I came back early. I've only been away for a month, but did any problems occur while I was gone?" [Ryouma]

When I said that, they said that nothing in particular happened. But it would appear that there's something bothering them.

"Actually, Celma-san's been out of it lately~…" [Maria]
"Celma-san? Is her health poor?" [Ryouma]
"I don't think she has any ailments. She's making delicious meals for us as always, and she's always cheerful

in the mornings. Just that… once work finishes and during our rest days, she would become lifeless." [Fina]

…Is she worried about something? I'm not particularly good at giving advice regarding worries, but if she has some worries regarding her work, I might be able to help…

"I guess I'll talk to her for a bit." [Ryouma]
"Really?" [Fina]
"I don't know if I can help, but if it's something related to her job, then I might be able to do something. I do need to act like a proper boss now and then after all." [Ryouma]

After I said that, I left the breakroom, and went over to Celma-san's workplace, the kitchen.

Erasing my presence, I stealthily took a peek at the kitchen. There, Celma-san was standing, mixing the soup as she pondered something to herself undecidedly.

"Good morning, Celma-san." [Ryouma]
"Eh!? Oh dear me… Boss, welcome home." [Celma]
"I'm home. By the way, is something the matter? You don't seem to be in high spirits…" [Ryouma]
"Oh, no, no… There's no such thing. I've just been thinking a lot lately ever since I received a certain letter." [Celma]

As I was wondering how far I could meddle in her problems, the person-in-question herself spoke.

Apparently, the boss of the lodging Celma-san used to work at sent a letter through the merchant guild. Ever since reading that letter, she's been reminiscing the past.

The workload was much bigger than here at the store, but Celma-san loved cooking for people and hearing them say how delicious her cooking was. Celma-san's face as she spoke of the past was a truly beautiful smile.

"I see… Well, for the meantime, it's good to know that you're not sick." [Ryouma]

This isn't something I can help. I can't tell her to stop thinking of her former work. There's no meaning in saying something like that.

Besides, I'm not that much different from her. Ever since I've come to this world, there were times when I thought back to my previous world as well. It's not really much different from wanting to reminisce from t ime to time. She's not causing problems in her work either, so there's really nothing for me to say.

"Sorry for worrying you, Boss." [Celma]
"Don't sweat it. After all, it's not something you need to apologize for. That aside, please do tell Maria-san and the others. They've been worrying about you, you know?" [Ryouma]
"Oh, they were? Hehe... then in that case, please tell then in my stead, Boss." [Celma]

Me?

"You want me to tell them?" [Ryouma]
"I just thought I'd make another dish for them. If I work now, I should make it in time to serve them another dessert before break ends. I need to do my best for everyone's sake." [Celma]

Celma-san said those words with the same smile she showed me when she was reminiscing of the old days.

So Celma-san's the type to speak through her actions rather than her words.

"I understand. Please do your best, Celma-san." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I left the kitchen, and went back to the breakroom. There, I told the others what Celma-san told me.

"So that's how it was." [Carm]
"So she wasn't troubled or anything." [Fina]
"That's great~" [Maria]

It's really good to hear that nothing was wrong. I also understand now just how good the relationship is between these employees of mine. That's another plus.

After all, when the relationship in the workplace is bad, or even when the relationship isn't bad, but just that

the employees don't care about each other… then small problems are bound to ensue. Those small problems would eventually lead to making quarrels amongst them more likely.

On top of that, such an environment would pile up stress on the employees, causing them to be more prone to mistakes and to be unhappy at their work. Moreover, they'll be more likely to fall sick physical or mentally.

Above all, this world hasn't progressed much in its machineries compared to my previous world. Which goes to mean that labor force is pretty much equal to manpower. And because environment and motivation are important factors in improving a worker's efficiency, just raising the salary won't be enough.

My store is doing great at handling its employees. I'd like to keep this up.

For that reason, I want Carm-san and the others who are in charge to do their best. Of course, I'll be doing what I can as well.

I pondered on the different welfare benefits I could provide, and the first thing that flashed through my mind were bonuses, salaries, and summer vacation? Is there something like that in this world? Hmm… Although it's good to be enthusiastic, I'll need to ensure that the things I come up with match with the common sense of this world.

Suddenly, it hit me. Fina-san and the others left their homes to earn money, right? And yet… they haven't gone back to their village in this whole year at all ? Is that really ok?

It's a good opportunity, so I might as well try asking them. If they do say that they want to take a vacation and visit their home, then it won't be a problem since I can work in their place after I get my inheritance. I'll be treating it as paid vacation, but I wonder if it's alright to give them money for the trip as well.

"Right. Fina-san, Maria-san, mind if I ask you two something for a bit?" [Ryouma]

"What is it?" [Fina]
"Please ask us whatever you want, Boss~." [Maria]
"Jeanne-san and you two left your village in order to make money, right? Do you have any plans of going back to your village?" [Ryouma]

The moment I asked that, the two of them immediately looked at each other, and panicked. Then with a docile expression, they answered.

"None… as of now…" [Maria]
"None of us three have any plans of going back. Umm… Boss? Are we being fired?" [Fina]

Eh!? Why did they take it that way!?

"You're not. You're not being fired at all. I'm just asking since I'm worrying whether it's alright for you three not to bring home money to your family and see them. After all, you three are working out here to provide for your family, right?" [Ryouma]

I answered immediately, and the two seemed to have calmed down, breathing out sighs of relief. After that, I asked Carm-san to explain to me why the two had that sort of misunderstanding.

First off, this world does have its postal service, so people who leave home to work are able to communicate with their families via letters. And through the merchant guild, though they do have to pay a fee, they are also able to send money back home.

Also, it's normal for such workers not to go home unless the reason is because of a life-endangering illness or a funeral service. Because of that the question "Do you have any plans of going back to your village?" was interpreted as, "Is there anyone among you who wouldn't mind retiring?"

"My deepest apologies for surprising you two. I don't have any intentions of dismissing either of you, so please rest assured. In fact, I wish for you all to continue to work with me in the future. I was just wondering whether it'd be a good idea to create an opportunity for you three to visit your home once a year." [Ryouma]

They seem to have finally understood when I said those words. Although they were still quite shocked when they heard that on top of being given a long leave, their travel expenses would also be paid for , they were indeed happy to have the opportunity to meet their relatives again without losing their job. After all, even though it's accepted in this world that going home isn't possible unless one loses their job, they still can't help wanting to see their families, right?

After having lunch together, I discussed the concept of paid vacations and salaries with Carm-san.

As a result, it was decided that it'll be possible for the employees to file a vacation leave ahead of time, in which they'll then be allowed to leave for a significant period of time. And with enough money provided to allow one to stay at the cheapest inns – although no food is included in the calculations – and the least amount of days required, the employees will have a much easier time visiting their families.

Continuing, I asked him regarding the status of the store.

The other stores don't have any problems either. If there's anything to take note of it's that the adventurers have frequently been re questing for branches of the laundromat to be put up in the other towns as well. Because of that, Caulkins-san and his group proposed to use lure away the other researchers that are still researching slimes.

Slime researchers are mostly ignored, so there are very few amongst them that have confidential information. Because of that, there shouldn't be any problems in luring them away to work for my store.

Moreover, because of the poorness of communication technology in this word, there are many people in the towns that we don't have a branch in that don't know about our store. And even those that do know about store don't know about the usefulness of slimes. Although there are many people as well who think that some slimes can be used, the image of slimes being weak and useless is just too deeply ingrained into the minds of the masses.

But that also goes to say that this is an opportunity to lure away those poor slime researchers that are still being given the cold shoulder. And by luring them away, we'll gain new manpower for the new branch stores. After teaching the promising ones amongst the new employees, we'll be able to raise some new demon slave practitioners.

There's no reason for me to refuse, so I agreed and approved of the plan of luring away slime researchers in order to prepare the new store branches.

"…It's almost time to close the store." [Carm]

I hadn't realized it until Carm-san mentioned it, but apparently we had spent a long time talking about the store's welfare programs and other matters.

After closing the store, and after finishing the work that needed to be done after closing the store, I went to the merchant guild.

I'm heading to the guild to deposit the income of the store.

The guild also works as a bank and as a money-exchanger. It's also possible to create an account under one's personal name as a merchant or the name of one's store.

My store has its own account. Because of that Carm-san goes along with Fei-san and Li Ling-san to deposit the money at least three times a week.

The only money in the store are the copper coins used as change and the employees' salaries. As well as the funds stored in the store's treasury to be used to replenish the miscellaneous goods of the store when necessary.

There's no other way to deposit the money, but to carry a large, heavy bag filled with copper coins. But when I'm around, I can simply tuck away the money in my 'Item Box', making transport a walk in the park. And more than anything, with the money hidden in my 'Item Box', there's no danger of dropping the money or being stolen from. Because of that it's usually best for me to carry the money myself.

"Every time I do this, I feel like the security guard of a bank's armored transport car… There's no danger in dropping the money, but I should hurry up and deposit this." [Ryouma]

I hurried my pace as I muttered that. When I got to the merchant's guild, I deposited the money. And then I went back to the house that I haven't been in for about a month now.

I had made a wall out of a steel plate and boulder to block the entrance and prevent magical beasts from settling inside the abandoned mine. It's a bit of a hassle that I can't go rest immediately whenever I get back,

but… well….

As I thought to myself the usual things I would think of whenever I returned, I finally arrived to my house.

Chapter 35

While Ryouma was preparing to go to the Great Forest of Shurus.

In the Kingdom of Riforu, stood a gaudy building. On its signboard 'Riforu Kingdom Tamer Guild Main Branch' was written. And a number of well-dressed people could be seen going in and out of one of the rooms of the tamer guild branch.

They are the branch leaders of the tamer guild of the slave demon practitioners and conjurers of the Riforu Kingdom. Right now, they are attending the meeting that is held once a year.

Amongst the attendees is the leader of the tamer guild branch of Gimuru, Matthew. At this time, a man walked toward him and spoke to him.

"Matthew, how about a drink with me and our friends?" [Man]
"But of course, Nejil-sama! It's an honor for someone like me to be invited by someone of your stature." [Matthew]

The man who spoke to Matthew is Zest Nejil. He is one of the nine members responsible for electing the guild masters of the tamer guild. Moreover, on top of the influence his position entails, he is also the person who recommended Matthew after receiving a bribe.

When Matthew saw him, he quickly humbled himself, and accompanied him with the people he had in tow to a high-class bar.

Matthew and Zest's cronies enjoyed the luxurious food and wine, currying favor with Zest as they did. When more food and wine arrived, the conversation switched up a bit as Zest spoke to Matthew.

"Oh, right. Matthew, there's something I've been wanting to speak to you about." [Zest]
"With me, Zest-sama?" [Matthew]

Anxiety, distress, expectation, and fear mixed altogether filling Matthew's heart.

"It's only something I've recently been made aware of, but I've heard there's an excellent demon slave practitioner at your guild." [Zest]
"But, of course. I am always keeping a watchful eye over the progress of my juniors." [Matthew]

Matthew replied with confidence. There are many demon slave practitioners under Matthew that can transport the ores from Gimuru's mine. To Matthew, the mark of an excellent demon slave practitioner is one who can employ strong magical beasts. Which is why Matthew himself believed that his guild had many excellent practitioners.

"That's all well and all, but from what I've heard this slave demon practitioner uses slimes to make a profit. Moreover, this profit isn't just a meagre amount. If it's not too much trouble, I'd like to get in on this little secret, how does this practitioner of yours make his profit? I'd really love to have the people of my branch follow suit, you see." [Zest]

When the slave demon being a slime entered Matthew's ears, the image of a young boy he detested immediately flashed through his mind.

(I was wondering who he was referring to when he spoke of an excellent demon practitioner, but he's actually talking about that brat that can't use anything but slimes!? To think even Zest-sama would hear of that… how aggravating. A blunder…)

"What's the matter? Can't you tell me how that slave demon practitioner is making a profit with slimes?" [Zest]

Although Matthew hesitated momentarily, he answered in the end.

"If it's that practitioner you're referring to; he's using his slimes to eat the filth from clothes to operate a laundromat." [Matthew]
"But that shouldn't be possible. Dissolving the filth is possible, but the clothes would also dissolve." [Another

Guildmaster]

A guildmaster who was listening from the side as he drank said that.

"Certainly, it would normally be impossible, but if it's his slimes, then it's possible." [Matthew]
"Do you know how he's doing it?" [Guildmaster 1]
"How is he training them?" [Guildmaster 2]
"Didn't you say just now that you kept a watchful eye over your juniors?" [Guildmaster 3]

Sweat began to run down Matthew's forehead as the questions were thrown at him one after another. As the questions poured relentlessly, Zest's voice diffused the situation.

"Now, now, everyone. Let's not all talk at the same time, or else Matthew will never be able to speak. Now then, Matthew. Mind telling us everything one by one?" [Zest]
"O-Of course!" [Matthew]

It was because Zest wanted to know how the slimes could reap a profit that he called Matthew here.

Matthew understood that, so he decided to try and trick Zest and the others as he spoke of Ryouma's laundromat as if he was well-informed, twisting the story to suit his own conveniences.

"Actually, the slimes he's using is a new variant. His slimes have a special trait that can dissolve the filth off clothes without dissolving the clothes along with it."
"Special trait, huh?" [Guild Master 1]
"It's not because of some sort of training?" [Guild Master 2]
"Where do you catch that sort of slime?" [Guild Master 3]
"If what you're saying is true, then why aren't there any rumors?" [Guild Master 4]

The people in the room stared harder at Matthew.

"Actually, that slave demon practitioner is still only a child, and since he's a bit of a problem child, I'm actually at a loss at what to do with him." [Matthew]
"…Continue." [Zest]
"Ever since that boy has registered, he hasn't done a single job. And under the protection of someone who discovered the slime, he kept the information, and monopolized it. Then he used the slime to make a killing with his laundromat. With all the profit he's made, he just plays around nowadays.

I've sent him teachers (Ruffians) to help him change his lifestyle, but my feelings couldn't reach him at all. And instead he hired body guards with the money he has made to send away all of the men I've sent to him." [Matthew]
"You're saying Gimuru's guild can't even discipline a kid?" [Guildmaster 1]
"Aren't you just being lazy?" [Guildmaster 2]

Matthew was showered with criticism, but Zest only put a stop to it as he spoke.

"…I think I understand the situation. There are all sorts of people in the world. And amongst these, there are many that can't be reached no matter how much effort one puts. I suppose that boy is like that. Still… being a guildmaster this isn't something that can be ignored… Looks like you've walked into a disaster, huh, Matthew?" [Zest]
"Thank you, Zest-sama." [Matthew]

When Zest spoke those words, the people criticizing Matthew stopped talking. But unexpectedly, Matthew couldn't relax despite Zest's questioning stopping.

If one were to put it in simple words, the man known as Zest is actually a cheapskate. He's the sort of man who would accommodate someone bribing him, but will refuse to do anything when he can't make a profit.

Zest actually never cared from the start whether a slave demon practitioner was good or bad, all he really wanted to know was a way to make money. But at the same time, although he's objective was indeed money, it still can't be denied that Zest is one of the few people in the tamer guild that has begun to see slimes in a new light.

Matthew and all the people around Zest are all aware of Zest's attachment to money. It is, after all, the very reason why they were able to benefit from him so easily. Such a person couldn't possibly give up on information that could possibly become a money-bearing tree. Because of that, everyone but Zest couldn't help but be uneasy, waiting for the next words to come out of Zest's mouth.

Surprisingly, however, the words to come out of Zest's mouth next was completely different from what they were expecting.

"By the way, Matthew. A new town is being built at Gimuru, right? You must be busy." [Zest]
"W-Well yes. In fact, we are always being pestered by people to lend magical beasts for transporting resources and goods. On top of that the mine also needs our magical beasts. Because of that we don't have any margin for handling requests coming from places other than those two places." [Matthew]

Although Matthew was suspicious at the sudden change in topic, he still answered. At his reply, Zest nodded as if it was exactly as he had thought.

"As expected. In that case, I'll send some of my people to your branch. I'll send them as soon as I get back to my branch. Please do accept them." [Zest]
"Huh… In any case, I'm grateful for the help, but what kind of people will you be sending?" [Matthew]
"I'll be sending you some of the more skilled practitioners from my branch, the Three Harken Siblings. You've heard rumors of them, yes?" [Zest]

Of course, Matthew's heard of them. The others too, and they were quite surprised.

The Three Harken Siblings, as the name implies, refer to three conjurers that happen to be blood-related siblings. They have many C Rank magical beasts under them, and their eldest brother can even control a B Rank magical beast. On top of that, they even have experience subjugating an A Rank magical beast once.

Still, although these three are exceptional conjurers, they are problem children. Their behavior isn't something to be praised. Moreover, while ambition isn't necessarily a bad thing, these three tend to attempt contract with any magical beast they like regardless of affinity or rank, causing rampages to occur from time to time. They do, however, take measures to ensure everything is safe, so there're barely any casualties from their actions, and even when there are, it's mostly only injuries to themselves.

Although they haven't caused any harm to the commoners, their past records and their subordinates have caused scandals, earning them Zest's disfavor as he hated commotions. He may have let them off with only a warning, but there's no doubt that these three siblings were trouble.

"But that's!" [Matthew]
"What? Are you dissatisfied?" [Zest]

Matthew would definitely be grateful for extra help, but of course, that's only true when the people he'll be receiving are decent. It's only a given after all that Matthew wouldn't be willing to accept something that he knows to be a problem. Unfortunately, though, Matthew doesn't really have a choice. If he is to go further in his career, he can't go against someone as influential as Zest directly.

"N-No, not at all… Only, isn't it a waste to use such exceptional people for nothing but transport?" [Matthew]
"They've gotten in over their heads a wee bit too much, so I figured I'd let these ambitious youngsters take a break for a while. And a job that only requires them to transport things should be perfect for a breather. Oh, and it seems you're misunderstanding something. I'm not thinking of lending them. I am lending them to you, and you will accept." [Zest]

As Zest said that, he looked over to the others, and said.

"If there is anyone amongst you that have any spare men, please do feel free to lend them to Matthew. It's imperative that we help each other in times such as this." [Zest]

When Zest said that, the people in the room suddenly started saying that they'll be sending people over to Gimuru as well. Amongst the names that the others gave, names of people famous for their bad behavior and shoddy skills would sometimes come up. Today, Matthew had a great crowd of problem children pushed onto him.

When their business at the bar finally settled, Zest paid for the bar's bill. But before he went back, he grabbed Matthew's shoulder tightly, and then said.

"Well then, Matthew. You should continue to work hard from now on. I expect much from you, you know? But for now, I think it'd be better if you took a break along with all the people we sent you. I hear it's been getting real busy lately after all." [Zest]

As he said that, Zest left the bar with the other guildmasters. Matthew who was left alone there quietly went

back to his lodging. There, he locked himself in his room, and held his head.

"Not good… Damn it! Damn it! Damn it! But at least he hasn't completely abandoned me yet, next time when there's something I should… No! I need increase the bribe I'm paying to Zest-sama! As long as I give him money, then the problem should somehow work itself out… But those people they sent me. They pushed all the problem children onto me. If something happens, the one who's going to be held responsible is me! Shit!! No… I should at least act meekly…" [Matthew]

All alone by himself, Matthew began to think of a plan on how to break out of this predicament he had been thrust in. But to his dismay, the day passed with no good news…

Chapter 36

When I got back to Gimuru from the labyrinth, I spent two weeks resting and preparing. When I finally left, the trip southeast to the Great Forest of Shurus took me 17 days all in all. As of now, it is the 2nd afternoon since I've began to move within the Great Forest of Shurus.

The path I'm following is an animal trail. There is also a road here as there are adventurers that go through here, but it's narrow and isn't being maintained.

Just as the name, the Great Forest of Shurus, implies, the area here is full of trees covered by vines, making it difficult to see. This is probably the most difficult I've had when it comes to spotting enemies. There are just too many trees and thickets, and the shadow they cast makes it difficult to distinguish things.

"I'm still better off than most other adventurers though… Although this certainly is the most difficult trip I've made." [Ryouma]

I've passed many adventurers along the way, but because they don't have the Eternal Darkness insect repellant, they were all greatly affected by the insects and leeches of the Great Forest of Shurus.

The Eternal Darkness insect repellant is something that my grandmother developed when she was confined here. It's not something that just anyone can get their hands on. It's thanks to Gayn's group that I'm able to have such an easy time here in the Great Forest.

For normal adventurers, they have to buy an insect repellant from the market. But those ones can only work on insects and not leeches. Moreover, the repellant can be diluted by sweat, so overtime its effect will wear off. And the adventurer will have to rub it all over his body again.

"And with an environment like this, it's impossible not to sweat." [Ryouma]

This sort of environment is comparable to a jungle. There are leeches and the humidity is high, so naturally, being in such an environment, it's only natural to sweat. And all the adventurers I've passed by are proof of that. They were all sweating. On top of that, they had a unique stench from the mixing of their sweat and the medicine they are using.

I hope I don't meet any more adventurers along the way. As I thought that to myself, I continued along.

For the record, it's not because they stink that I don't want to meet them, ok? I mean they do stink, but that's not something that they can help. The reason I don't want to meet them is because I don't like the way they look at me.

The Great Forest of Shurus is a dangerous area littered with magical beasts over the D Rank. And in such a dangerous area, a kid like me is loitering. Naturally, whenever those adventurers see me, they'll call out to me, warning me to leave before I die. I don't blame them for thinking of me as a lost or reckless young boy. I mean given the situation, it's only normal to think so, right?

The Great Forest of Shurus isn't blocked by any sort of fence, so even low ranked adventurers can enter it. There's no guarantee that one will keep their life while in the forest, so other adventurers will always scold low-ranked adventurers whenever they spot one. It's because of that that I raised my Rank to C first before attempting this quest.

But even then, when I stopped by a village last night… Actually, rather than a village, I guess it's closer to a base camp; Anyway, I was still told by many adventurers to go back.

Of course, in a situation like that, I decided to show them my guild card to prove that I was already a C Rank adventurer. But although it's true that being a C Rank meant I had some power, it's also true that there are differences in power amongst those in the C Rank.

Moreover, being in C Rank at such a young age caused many to become jealous. They tried to hide it, sure, but it still showed in the way they talked. There were also those who didn't show jealousy, but the fact that my being a C Rank at this young age being a cause for many adventurers' jealousy is undeniable. In fact, I was even jeered at this morning.

The jeers I got where when I passed by some adventurers when I left the village. I don't know how many times I had to explain to them that I was eligible to enter this forest, but while I was explaining to them, we were attacked by some raptors. I worked together with the six of them to subjugate the raptors, but I ended up killing way more than they did.

Of course, I didn't do something boorish like call them weak or anything as I do think that they could have dealt with the raptors even without me, but their pride was still visibly hurt. I didn't want to bother myself with them, but the people that were hurt and the people that were comforting them all felt the same. I felt bad, so I just gave a few words to the people jeering at me and the people that were comforting them, and then left.

Can't say I'm a fan of situations like those, but it's impossible to be liked by everyone. Sure it doesn't feel good, but it's not something I can't handle. Besides I don't think I'll need to endure much while in the Great Forest, so I just let it slide.

It's not the first for me anyway. In my previous life I've had many situations like these ones. And back then I was able to ignore them. Of course, the situation then was a bit different in that instead of jealousy, I was looked down on, but my response is the same. Only the details are different.

Speaking of which, I'm currently a bit sensitive to negative emotions. As for why it's because of the influence of the demon king's fragments.

A person would get stressed whenever hit by negative emotions. And depending on how he receives it, he could resist it, throw it away, or even worry about it. That's normal. I doubt there are many people who could afford not to feel anything despite being the target of another's ill will.

But for someone who holds the demon king's fragments, it's a bit different in that that person is much more sensitive to the negative emotions of the people around him. It's that heightened sensitivity that I find so exhausting. More than likely it was purposely made that way to weaken the heart, and speed up the corrosion.

I've already heard of this from Gayn's group back when I met with them, and according to them, they've already repressed it enough such that it won't affect the way I look at people or the way I speak. If it wasn't for their help, the demon king's fragment would have already affected my day-to-day life.

"Anyway, there's not much point in thinking about this. It's not something I can do anything about after all. More than that…" [Ryouma]
"Gyaa!" [Monster]

I calmly reached for the katana by my waist. In the next instant, a magical beast leaned out of the thickets on the right, sweeping with the claws on its forelegs.

With a step back, I dodged the claws of the beast. Then as I turned toward my right, I drew my sword. And in a flash, I cut off its neck and subjugated it. But I can still feel the presence of many magical beasts in the area. They've been hiding their presence because they wanted to take me by surprise, but after that last magical beast, they gave up on the ambush and stopped hiding their presence. Now they're coming at me at full force.

"Gurururu…" [Monster 1]
"Gya! Gya!" [Monster 2]
"Gii!" [Monster 3]

The magical beasts that are attacking me right now are known as Raptor. They are a little smaller than horses and are similar to dinosaurs in their appearance. They run with their two hind-legs. And being a little smart, they prefer to hunt with surprise tactics or as groups.

The raptors are magical beasts known for their numbers as well as their many various species. But the kind of raptors that can be seen in the Great Forest of Shurus could be said to be perfect for the area. Their bodies are smaller than the others and the color of their hide is even green, allowing them to blend themselves with the surrounding like a natural camouflage.

But although I am currently being surrounded by 30 raptors, I'm not in any danger. I'll just lop their heads off according to the order of their attacks.

The herd of raptors surrounded me, and attacked me both from the front and behind. But I only dodged them as I leisurely lopped their heads off.

As their heads flew one after another, their corpses gradually littered the surrounding area, piling up atop one

another. When they realized winning wasn't possible, the herd of dinosaurs scattered in all directions like baby spiders.

"Nine raptors before they finally ran away, huh? I guess their heads really are good." [Ryouma]

If those were goblins just now, they would have attacked regardless of how many of their comrades died. Compared to that, the raptors were certainly smarter. Anyway, I should retrieve these piled up corpses now. It's not good to waste the corpses of beasts.

"'Dimension Home'" [Ryouma]

While keeping alert of my surroundings, I used Dimension Home, and brought out the grave slime to have it retrieve the corpses.

After investigating the grave slime's abilities, I found out that its Enshrine Remains skill is able to retrieve not only the corpses of undead magical beasts but even the corpses of the living. Moreover, it also has the effect of keeping the bodies from rotting.

Of course, it's not to the point where it can completely prevent the corpses from rotting, but according to my experiments, it can at least keep a corpse that would normally take 1 or 2 days to rot, and extend it until 10 days.

Because of this, I'll be able to retrieve the hide and meat of magical beasts and animals better.

"Grave slimes are really convenient." [Ryouma]

I could also feed the corpses to the slimes, but preserving the corpses is best. Especially since retrieving the hide is easiest this way.

Preserving is possible by stripping the skin off the meat, then scraping off the meat and the oil, and then using the tannin from the plants to treat it. But although I know this from the survival skills I received from Kufo – although it's just the basics of basics – the process is long and will take a lot of effort.

Back in the Forest of Gana, I lived there so I created a workplace so I could work without any hassle. But when I got to Gimuru, I started either giving the corpses to the artisans in the town or fed it to the slimes.

But with the grave slimes, I can now put the corpses on hold for a much longer time, giving me time to hand it over to the artisans at its best condition. The grave slime is an extremely useful slime.

As I walked while thinking that to myself, the animal trail I have been following suddenly grew wider. And from the distance, I could make out a wall of rock.

"So that's the next base camp… Well it's just going to be a hassle anyway, so I guess I'll just hurry on without stopping by." [Ryouma]

I hurried my pace, and headed for the camp. This part isn't really pleasant, so I want to get over it as soon as possible. I did also think of going around the wall, but the guards could mistake one for a magical beast, so there's a tacit agreement between adventurers not to hide when near the base camp.

So in order to minimize my troubles, I decided to just go through the base camp as quick as I could.

Or at least that's what I was planning when I headed for the base camp, but…

"Even if you are C Rank——" [Adventurer 1]
"This isn't a place for brats like you!" [Adventurer 2]
"——Besides don't you think it's reckless for you to go by yourself——"[Adventurer 3]

See? It's such a hassle.

And so, when I got to the entrance of the base camp, I was stopped by three adventurers. No matter how much I tried to explain, they scolded me and tried to persuade me. Because of that we started gathering attention, and more and more adventurers came to take a look.

On top of their jealous and unhappy words, their gazes were painful. I wonder if I should just beat up these guys, and go my way…

As I was starting to think toward that direction, a loud voice suddenly resounded.

"Yer in the way! Quit blockin' the entrance! And quit yer yapping! All of ya!" [Voice]

The owner of the voice was a big and brawny man nearly 2 meters tall.

"Glen-san…" [Adventurer 1]
"Get outta my way, and don't block me." [Glen]
"But this kid…" [Adventurer 1]
"Haah? Just leave him alone. Ain't it common sense for adventurers to take care of ther own lives? Even if he dies it's all on him. 'Sides I'm no different from that lil' brat there, I'm also on my own, ya know?" [Glen]
"But this kid can't be comp——" [Adventurer 2]
"Look, I told you, whether that kid dies or not is on him! 'Sides if ya actually opened yer eyes then maybe you'd have realized that he didn't even have a single scratch on him. A brat that could get here without a scratch's more than qualified." [Glen]

At Glen's words, the spectators suddenly seemed to have lost interest as they opened a path. Even the adventurers who kept pestering me kept their mouths shut. Great, it's a chance! If I go now, I'll be able to leave. Oh, wait, I have to go thank the guy.

"It was Glen-san, yes? Thank you very much." [Ryouma]
"Haah? Don't sweat it. Ya just so happened to be in the way is all." [Glen]

As Glen-san left, I bowed my head again. Then I went through the exit on the other side. When I finally took some distance from the camp, I muttered to myself.

"If everyone was like that guy, it would be great, but... sigh…" [Ryouma]

That man called Glen-san didn't carry an ounce of malice toward me. There are also people like that. People that aren't jealous of me.

I'm always thankful for those kind of people and their words. Although we may have only passed by each other or stumbled upon each other in the camp, I still make sure to keep their words in my heart. Although from time to time, there are also people that try to meddle in my business who don't have any malice. I don't know if it's because they're good or because of their sense of justice, but whatever the reason may be, it's certainly troublesome.

After that, I continued on my way as I fought the magical beasts that attack me.

Chapter 37

Third Day

I spent the night last night within the Dimension Home. When morning came, I exited it as soon as I finished my preparations. The place I came out to was the base of a large tree only slightly separated from the animal trail. When I came out, my back was facing the tree.

But as soon as I came out, I s uddenly felt the presence of a magical beast, coming from the direction of the animal trail.

Unsheathing my sword, I paid careful attention to my surroundings. What came was a lone bird-type magical beast. It's exterior looked like that of an ostrich. It ran at a terrifying speed toward me.

"Eh? Is this guy…" [Ryouma]
"Gegegegegegege!!!" [Ostrich-like Monster]

The bird-type magical beast ran toward me, but instead of attacking, it avoided me, and continued on the animal trail ahead. As the bird-type magical beast left me, I suddenly heard the sound of a great number of feet moving as the sound of branches and plants being crushed underfoot accompanied it. When I looked over I saw an astounding number of raptors.

"This early in the morning!?" [Ryouma]

The bird-type magical beast that passed by just now is a Take Ostrich. It looks like an ostrich, but it's mode of life is closer to that of a vulture or a hyena. That bird is carnivorous, but it's power is weak. It can't fly either. But in exchange for those two things, it's been blessed with strong legs, allowing it to lead other carnivorous magical beasts around by using itself as bait. In doing so, it's able to lead other magical beasts to kill other preys. After which, the ostrich would run away, and then come back later to grab the corpse.

"The trees are in the way, so I can't know for sure, but… there should be over 50 of them. N ot exactly a funny number... " [Ryouma]

While I calmly said that, the raptors were clearly agitated as they continued to run toward me. Their eyes were bloodshot and their fangs could be seen peeping out of their mouths. That herd of raptors neared me like flowing water. I could tell since a while ago, but it looks like these guys really have no intention of trying out any sneak tactics this time.

The pressure given off by that herd was terrifying. Any other adventurer would lose their calm before it, causing them to take too long to respond and die. According to my investigation from before, apparently the leading cause of death in these areas is the Take Ostrich.

"This number isn't really something I can just laugh off. 'Paralyze Mist' 'Spark Ball' 'Spark Ball' 'Spark Ball' 'Spark Ball'" [Ryouma]

I calmly casted an intermediate poison spell toward the rushing herd of raptors , followed with four casts of an original electric-type spell.

The Paralyze Mist has an immediate paralyzing effect on all bodies that inhale it, while the Spark Ball fires a projectile that affects the surrounding area with an electric attack.

The paralyzing poison mist caused the raptors' movement to worsen, but it wasn't enough to stop them in their tracks. But with their movement slower, they weren't able to dodge the oncoming Spark Ball, and they were swallowed by the bursting electric shock.

"That took out around 30%, huh!" [Ryouma]

I cut down two more raptors as I said that. The number of raptors that have been knocked down by the magic is about 30%. Against humans, Spark Ball would deal plenty of damage, but against magical beasts, the power is quite weak.

Despite that though, the herd of raptors suddenly stopped in their tracks, and began to run away. I guess it must be because they suddenly lost 30 percent of their men.

After I was sure that the raptors were gone, I went to check the defeated raptors' status with my magic.

"Ah, as expected…" [Ryouma]

There were still plenty of raptors that weren't dead, but because of the effects of the paralyzing poison mist and the electric attack, they couldn't move their body.

It would be problematic if they attack me once they recover, so I might as well finish them off here painlessly, and then recover their corpses.

"Still though... This place really is the home of beasts… to think I'd get attacked this early in the morning." [Ryouma]

As I muttered that to myself, I left after making sure that the trees hadn't caught fire because of my electric attacks.

After walking until noon, I found myself before a large rock where the animal trail ended. From here on I'll have to move without a path to follow.

"There should be a lake southeast of this rock. Right, let's go there first." [Ryouma]

I walked as I read out the directions of the village written in the letter Gayn's group had sent me. There's really no path here, so I had no choice but to proceed as I cut down the vines blocking my way. From time to time, I met some treants too, so I cut those down too before moving on.

Then after three hours of walking, the journey became even more difficult.

"As expected, this really isn't simple…" [Ryouma]

The ground in the surrounding area is all mud. So every time I took a step, the mud would swallow my foot all the way until the ankles, making it considerably harder to move. At the same time, the magical beasts would keep on attacking me without holding back.

And right now, there is a 4-meter-tall, brown-colored alligator glaring at me.

This is a Galmos Alligator, a C Ranked magical beast. Its strong jaw could easily tear through the flesh and armor of humans . Unfortuna tely for it, but right now, it c an't use that jaw it's so proud of .

I had already taken everything into consideration before setting out after all. Which goes to say that I had also prepared a plan to deal with the Galmos Alligator .

According to the m iscellaneous knowledge that I knew in my previous life, the alligators have strong bites, but have relatively weak power when opening their mouths. So taking advantage of that, I transformed the concentrated hardening liquid plank and created a cylinder th e size of a spray can . I then filled that cy linder with the sticky slime's sticky liquid , and produce d a large supply which I brought with me here today.

Taking those cans into my hand, I would throw one into the mouth of a galm os alligator each time I came across one.
The cans are only durable enough not to break when dropped, so naturally they would break when crushed between those fangs that could easily tear off armors. And when it does, the sticky liquid will spill into the alligator's mouth.

The spilled sticky liquid will cling to the upper and lower jaws and all of the fangs of the alligator, spreading even more with each bite the alligator makes. In the end, the galmos alligator will no longer be able to open its mouth.

"I was worried at first at whether the alligators' saliva would dilute the effect of the sticky liquid, but things actually worked out better than expected." [Ryouma]

Of course, I did run some tests to ensure that the sticky liquid couldn't be washed off by water, but still… I didn't think it would work this well. I was only really hoping that it would buy me some time to make my move, so I'm really surprised.

Anyway, it's dangerous to just turn my back to this alligator and run, so I immediately pierced its head with my katana to subjugate it. Then I continued on my way as I retrieved its corpse.

This magical beast's hide can be used to make armors, clothes, bags, small accessories, and then sold at a

good price to the nobles. But the most profitable item are mounts made completely with the galmos alligator's fangs and hide. And naturally, the less injuries there are on the raw goods, the higher it sells.

After that, it took me another four hours of walking before I finally reached an area with no mud. Along the way, I met a total of 8 galmos alligators. Their sizes varied, but I hunted them all the same.

I quietly continued to walk again, and after two hours, I found myself in another muddy area.

I haven't reached the lake yet, but since I was planning to take a break anyway and since it's already getting dark, I decided to stop here and retire for the day… Or at least that's what I was thinking, but then it suddenly came to me that the area I'm in now ha d less living things in it than any other area I've come across yet.

Normally, there would at least be insects, but… I wonder if there's something here…?

I walked while paying careful attention to my surroundings. When the third minute struck, I suddenly felt something move!

Immediately, I jumped back. And right after, the sound of the trees' leaves being rustled entered my ears as a long, cylindrical, green lump the size of a log fell from a tree onto the place I was standing at just a moment ago.

"Is… Is my luck seriously that bad?" [Ryouma]

The lump that fell squirmed as it fixed its gazed at me. Of course, it's a living being after all, naturally it would have an eye or two, right? It sure hid itself well atop that tree considering how big it is though.

What's attacking me right now is a large snake that could swallow several humans in one gulp.

When I searched back in my mind through the information I prepared for this trip, I could only find one entry corresponding to this magical beast.

"Undead Snake, A Rank." [Ryouma]

There's more than one kind of snake in the Great Forest of Shurus, but considering its size, this is most likely the undead snake.

The undead snake is a magical beast that lives in the centermost area of the Great Forest of Shurus. The area we're in right now, however, is a long distance away from that. About a week's distance of walking.

"Well… it is a magical beast that lives within the Great Forest of Shurus, so it's not like there's no chance of it coming out. I guess I could just blame this to my bad luck." [Ryouma]

As I muttered that to myself, the undead snake crawled toward me, and attacked. It raised its sickle-shaped neck, and as soon as I entered its range, it reached out for my neck like a bullet, biting for my neck. Its speed was a league faster than any magical beast I've fought yet.

As I dodged its attack, I struck up with my katana toward its body. But when my katana touched its flesh, a resistance stronger than any other met my blade . I could only leave a shallow wound on its body.

Shallow as it may be, there's still plenty of blood coming out of that open wound. But the undead snake only ignored that wound as it tried to wine itself around me. In response, I reinforced my legs with ki, and sprung up, jumping over the undead snake. I struck downward toward the snake as I reached the other side. Then when I landed behind it, I took some distance.

While I am more than able to fight A Rank magical beasts, I can't let my guard down. As I thought that to myself, I cut a nearby tree with my katana, carving an arrow that pointed toward the direction I came from. I could lose my way in this forest if I keep fighting like this, so I've been paying attention not to forget. But with this, I'll be able to focus on the fight.

At that moment, the undead snake——

"As expected of something named undead…" [Ryouma]

The wounds on the sudden snake suddenly recovered in the blink of an eye.

The undead snake's special characteristic is its abnormal vitality and its fast regeneration. The speed of its recovery is so fearsome, it's almost like an undead. That's the story behind why a magical beast that's not undead has undead in its name.

Moreover, because the undead snake isn't an undead-type magical beast, light magic has no effect on it. Despite that, its recovery speed is far greater than that of ghouls. Knowing that, I could imagine fighting with it to be a pain.

"Fortunately, it's at least not venomous. Still though… this is the sort of magical beast that requires several people to cast magic on it to stop its movements. At which point, it then needs to be beaten repeatedly until it dies…" [Ryouma]

I more or less have a plan to deal with it, but for now, let's try fighting it normally. If it gets too dangerous, I'll go ahead and use my trump card. My trump card isn't really something I should use for various reasons.

"Shaa!!" [Undead Snake]

The healed snake came attacking at me as it sounded out a hoarse sound. Its way of attacking was the same as before: a sort of jumping attack. Dodging that, I clad my blade in cold using magic battle technique and the water-attribute magic power. This time, my cut went in deeper.

"Kishaaaa!!" [Undead Snake]

The wound this time didn't bleed like before, and instead the wound closed up frozen. The undead snake's voice was also much more pained this time compared to before, but…

"Shaaa!" [Undead Snake]

The undead snake jumped again. My attack just now had some effect, but it wasn't enough to kill it.

"If anything it just pissed it off." [Ryouma]

The undead snake ferociously bit and twirled about. It even climbed up the surrounding trees, and started attacking from all directions as it pleased. It could do that because it lived here. The home court's advantage so to speak.

I continued to dodge its attacks while I slashed back at it with my chill-clad blade, but no matter how many times I cut, I couldn't inflict a fatal wound on it. At most, I could only slow down its recovery.

Looks like cutting it just isn't sufficient…

As I thought that, I dodged the undead snake that had just tried to twirl itself around me, and took an overhead stance with my katana. I held the sword out toward the snake as I reinforced my whole body and my katana with ki.

"Ha!" [Ryouma]

And when the snake attacked me, I dodged it, and slashed down at its neck with all my strength. As my blade sunk 60cm into its neck, I successfully decapitated it. When I use ki, I could cut even with the guard on the sword, so I thought it might work. Without ki, I wouldn't even be able to cut with the guard of a sword, so cutting the snake in two wouldn't be possible, right?

"Shaa!? Shaaa!!!" [Ryouma]
"O!?

Surprisingly, the cut head was still alive. And the body started writhing about. I thought to crush its head, but I had to take a step back in order to not be caught up by its body. Then I took a look at its head.

"…What's going on with its body?" [Ryouma]

The cut head is actually already starting to regenerate its body from its open wound. I could still somehow come to terms with just not dying immediately, but something like this is… This really isn't an undead, right?

"I've heard that they're stronger than the C or B Rank magical beasts, but whether it's this undead snake or Rheinbach-sama's Ignis dragon, all the A Rank magical beasts are monsters." [Ryouma]

While I was dumbfounded like that, the snake's head had already regenerated its body. And it was now the same size as it was just a moment ago.

"Fortunately, it at least didn't regenerate its head from its body. But if this keeps up it'll take forever. I guess I'll have to do it. 'Exchange'" [Ryouma]

I sheathed back my katana to its scabbard as I casted my original space magic, Exchange. Suddenly, a 1.4-meter-long silver-colored short spear appeared within my hand.

The magic, Exchange, is able to transfer nearby objects . And being a more practical application of Pickup, it's able to take an item from the Dimension Home or from the Item Box.

Originally, I wanted this magic to work as its name implied, that is exchanging an object I had with something from inside the Dimension Home, but right now I can only take out objects at most. It's still an incomplete magic. I do one day hope to complete it though.

"This is the end!" [Ryouma]

I ran toward the snake with the short spear in hand. The undead snake was wary of me, having had its head cut off once, but after raising its sickle-shaped neck several times and swaying, it came to bite at me again.

It's an attack I've seen many times, so I calmly dodged its attack as I clad my short spear with ki. Then I thrusted that spear into the undead snake's body.

Just that wouldn't be able to stop the undead snake, but this is exactly what I've been aiming for. I let go of the spear with my hand, and dodged the snake that tried to twine itself around me.

The undead snake tried to chase after me, but suddenly, the undead snake fell to the ground. And its body started writhing about just like it did a while ago when I lopped off its head.

When I saw that, I knew that my trump card had worked. After that, I checked up on the snake, and when I confirmed that it was dead, I retrieved my spear.

"Good work, it's enough now." [Ryouma]

As I called out to my spear to thank it, the form of the spear crumbled, and it fell onto the ground. It then turned back into its original appearance, an iron slime.

What I used just now was the iron slime spear. But what defeated the undead snake wasn't just the iron slime alone.

Bodily fluids could be seen seeping out of the wound that the iron slime spear had just left. It's normal for blood to come out from wounds, but what's coming out of the snake isn't blood, but a bloody slime.

I had ordered an iron slime to create a hollow iron spear. And then in the hollow portion of that spear, I had ordered a bloody slime to wait. With the iron slime's natural hardness coupled with the reinforcement of my ki, its strength was more than enough. And I pierced the foe's body with the spear, upon which the iron slime transformed again. The bloody slime in the hollow portion of the spear then entered the blood vessels of the enemy through its open wound.

After that, the bloody slime sucked the enemy dry of its blood, killing it.

"I guess it does work even against A Rank magical beasts . I shouldn't use it too much though…" [Ryouma]

This technique is strong, but it's quite brutal. And chances are, it can kill an ything regardless of if its beas t or human. But then again, I don't know everything about magical beasts , so there might be one that could live through it, but for the most part, as long as I'm able to pierce with the spear, I should be able to kill the target.

At the very least, it's shown itself to be very effective when I tested it against the goblins and other various magical beasts when I first thought of it.

But while it's efficient, using it too much will dull my skill. More over, I also can't use it in front of other humans. Just thinking of the consequences if word of it gets out, and a villain finds out about it make s me

shiver.

One thin g's for sure though : this skill is definitely my trump card.

As I decided that in my heart, I retrieved the undead snake’s corpse, and then retired for the day. Today’s been really tiring…

Chapter 38

The Fourth Day

Today, I am walking again within the dense forest. The surrounding area all look the same, so it'll be a disaster if I ever get lost… Fortunately, I have no problems with water thanks to my water magic. And there're even greens and magical beasts that can be eaten around here, so there're no problems in that regard.

As I was thinking those sort of things to myself, I suddenly felt the presence of humans from ahead.

There's a person here? In a place like this? Moreover, alone? Hmm… but then again, I did come here all by myself, so I guess it wouldn't be too strange for there to be another person aside from me… I wonder if it's an adventurer who came here to collect something.

I approached the presence I felt while keeping my guard up. When I did, a man wearing an armor made of tree appeared before me. His body was covered in wounds all over, and blood was incessantly flowing out of him as he laid unconscious. A corpse? But just as I thought that, the man groaned.

"Ugh…" [Man]
"Are you still alive!? 'Light Ball'!" [Ryouma]

I fired a shot of Light Ball toward the man. It's to ensure that the man is not an undead-type magical beast. There are cases of corpses becoming undead and wraiths possessing bodies, so I have to check first before I try to save him.

From the looks of things, the man doesn't seem to be able to talk, so this is the fastest way of confirming things.

The Light Ball I shot went straight for the man, but the man didn't show any changes. And since he neither vanished nor show any signs of pain, I guess that means he's human.

"I'll save you now!" [Ryouma]

I ran toward the man while keeping wary.

"Are you alright? Can you hear me?" [Ryouma]
"U-Ugh… [Man]

I called out to the man as I ran toward him to confirm whether he was conscious or not, but all I got in response was a groan. In any case, healing comes first!

"'High Heal' 'High Heal' 'High Heal' 'High Heal'" [Ryouma]

I casted healing magic all over the man's body. The bleeding from the man's feet were especially severe. Like this the man won't be able to walk, much less fight, right? For some reason, no matter how much I casted healing magic, the bleeding wouldn't stop.

In any case, I better transport him to the Dimension Home first, and have the heal slimes help. And if anything, the Dimension Home is at least safe.

As I thought that, I held the man, and was about to bring him to the Dimension Home, but——'

"!?" [Ryouma]

As I was about to use Dimension Home, the moment I stopped focusing on the man, the man's body suddenly crumbled.

The bones throughout the man's body suddenly vanished, turning his body extremely soft. And suddenly, the man took into him the arms that I was holding him with as he threw his leaned toward me with his chest out.

"Pshaw!" [Ryouma]

I was surprised for a moment, but I quickly gathered myself, and calmly responded by wrapping my body in electricity. As a result, the man who had tried to swallow my arms into his body was electrocuted, and he

stopped moving. In that instance, I recovered my strength and shook the man, no, the something that looked like a man, into the ground, and then I kicked him.

That something that was kicked, crashed into a tree, and then crumbled. Continuing, I unsheathed my katana, and clad it in flames. Then with a stroke, I cut the something from its right leg all the way to its left armpit.

But that "something" didn't seem to be fazed by it, and instead it tried to run away. The "something" that was before me did not possess the same regenerative abilities that the undead snake possessed, so instead it tried to run away by throwing away its lower body, and using only its arms to crawl away.

Then in the next instance, that "something" lost its human form, and it transformed into the form of a small Take Ostrich.

"Ah!?" [Ryouma]

The "something" ran with a speed comparable to the real Take Ostrich, but unfortunately for it, I had no plans of letting it go. If I ever had such thoughts, it disappeared just now!

"'Barricade'! 'Bind Ivy'!!" [Ryouma]

With the wood element magic, I controlled the plants in the surrounding area, and created a wall, blocking the ostrich. And with another wood element magic, I tried to capture the ostrich with the vines. The result: success. These two magic make use of the surrounding greens, so it's difficult to use in places with no greens. But here in the Great Forest of Shurus? It's quite easy to use.

…But it can also become an obstacle to me, so I need to be careful when I use it.

"Oops. You think I'll let you escape!?" [Ryouma]

The "something" that was bound with ivy suddenly broke its form as it tried to escape. But seeing it attempt to run, I quickly contracted it!

The moment I invocated the contract, the "something" stopped moving. And a connection of magic power formed between us, indicating that the contract succeeded.

I brought it with me to the Dimension Home, and there I used Monster Identify to reveal the true identity of that "something".

"Just as I thought… I had my suspicions when I saw it change its form from the upper portion of a man's torso into a take ostrich, but from the looks of things, I seem to be right." [Ryouma]

This is the result of the Monster Identify.

Mimic SLime

Skills

Mimic Lv10
Mimic Memory Lv2
High-Speed Movement Lv8
Lure Prey Lv2
Enlarge Lv7
Compress Lv7
Consume Prey Lv3
Digestion Lv4
Absorption Lv7

This thing is neither a human nor a take ostrich. It was able to trick me with its Mimic Lv10 skill, but there's no doubt that it's a slime.

"You fooled me well. I thought you were a real human until the moment you attacked me. Hmm… thinking of that time when you tried to use High-Speed Movement to try to run away as you turned into a take ostrich… could it be? Are you also able to copy the abilities of the opponent you mimic? The consume prey does seem

like a skill a take ostrich would have…" [Ryouma]

As I thought that to myself, I ordered the mimic slime to transform into a take ostrich. After making it run around the Dimension Home, I was able to confirm that its speed was the same as a real take ostrich's. Well this is amazing…

The Mimic Memory that accompanies the mimic skill is probably the skill that allows the slime to learn the skills of its target. At that, I wondered whether the mimic slime would be able to transform into something else, but unfortunately, it could only transform into either a take ostrich or a raptor.

The form it took a while ago as a man was apparently a one-time thing. It can't transform into that anymore. There's probably some sort of condition that needs to be fulfilled before it's able to freely mimic.

As for the Enlarge and Compress skills, I was a bit surprised at first, but thinking about it now, the skills are probably for changing its size to match with its target. It is after all only the size of a basketball before mimicking. At that size, it could become a sort of portable magical beast, but there's no way it'd be able to trick its enemies.

Lastly, there's the Consume Prey skill…

"I take it this means that this slime is a predator, and not a prey." [Ryouma]

Slimes are generally at the bottom of the food chain, and are always being killed by humans and preyed upon by other magical beasts. But apparently, this slime has been living in such a ruthless environment that it actually transformed from a prey into a predator. This is just something I thought of just now, but I think it might have something to do with the fact that it hunts and then eats its prey.

What's strange about this slime is that it doesn't have the Split skill that other slimes have. I don't know how this slime manages to reproduce, but that's not something I can find out immediately, so I'll put it on hold for now.

In any case, I was surprised for a bit, but with this the matter has been settled.

I left the Dimension Home, and walked through the dense forest again. An hour passed, and I began to see an area where the trees have been knocked down.

"The lake's close." [Ryouma]

This trees that have been knocked down is proof that I'm close to the lake. Why? Because the magical beast that knocked this trees down is the Cannonball Rhinos. A large magical beast with the length of 3m. And as you'd expect, they live near water, and prey on fallen trees.

Incidentally, the Cannonball Rhinos is a B Rank magical beast, but unless you attack first, they won't do anything. They do tend to get worked up during breeding season, but as long as you take care not to get too close to them and offend them, then they won't attack. They're generally gentle magical beasts.

As long as you don't piss one off anyway. If you do, it won't be funny. The greatest special trait of the Cannonball Rhinos is the skin and hair covering its body. These two things are so hard it makes one question whether the Rhinos is truly a living thing. Even magic is inefficient against it. In fact, if it's only its defenses that we're considering, then it's definitely comparable to an A Rank magical beast.

Moreover, the Cannonball Rhinos is faster than its large frame would like you to believe. And after becoming an adult, it can even use the neutral magic, Strengthen Body.

A durable and heavy body coupled with a power that won't lose out. And on top of all that, a magic power that further strengthens it. With all that put together, it's charge is a thing to be feared. Take one directly, and you'll definitely incur a life-threatening wound.

Note though that the Cannonball Rhinos does not only live in the Great Forest of Shurus. There are some lost ones that have also been spotted in other plains and forests. There were also some who had apparently broken some gates and walls in the past. It's such that the Cannonball Rhinos received the nickname, "Wallsmasher."

As I recalled that information that I researched in the past, the lake came into view.

…Although I say lake, the water is muddy. It might be possible to drink it, but for humans we'll definitely need to boil it first. Not that it matters to me or anything since I can use water magic… As for the surrounding area…

"…There doesn't seem to be anything. Good." [Ryouma]

I was worrying whether there'd be Cannonball Rhinoses around, but fortunately that doesn't seem to be the case. I should take this opportunity, and pass through this area as soonas I can.

"If I head directly east from here, I should make it to Cormi Village in 4 hours… Looks like I should be able to make it to the village today." [Ryouma]

Using the compass I had prepared, I confirmed the direction, and headed east.

Along th way, I was attacked several times by raptors and blade rats. Naturally, I defeated those as I continued along my way.

The raptors don't really matter much, but the blade rats are actually quite difficult to fight. They might look small and cute, but their attacks aren't funny.

The blade rats spread their limbs and membrane part to glide through the air, but sharp, blade-like objects can be seen in its membrane part. With those, the blade rats fly through the air, attacking as they aimed for the carotid artery and throat.

No one should underestimate a magical beast just because it's small.

As I continued to walk along while paying attention to my surroundings, the presence of living beings gradually decreased. Until eventually, I spotted the figure of a person.

"Another person… No, a zombie, huh?"

It might've been because of the sound of the grass being pushed, but the "person" responded, and it faced toward me. When it did, I saw its abdomen gouged out and its windpipe bitten off by something. Obviously, it wasn't a person.

"'Light Ball'" [Ryouma]

I looked at the oncoming zombie with dead eyes as I shot Light Ball toward it. There's no reason for me to wait until it got closer. The Light Ball I shot cleanly blew off the head of the zombie.

With this, the problem was easily solved, but…

"Shuraaaa!" [Undead]
"Hy–…Hyu…" [Undead]
"GARURURUu…" [Undead]
"'Light Ball' Tch!" [Ryouma]

One hour passed after that. For some reason, the magical beasts that appeared were nothing but undead. The undead that appeared were the usual wraiths and zombies. There were also magical beast corpses turned undead, the beast zombies.

There were many kinds of beast zombie. Of course, there were raptors and blade rats. But there was also the C Rank magical beast, the Anchor Chameleon. It had the ability to change its body's color to meld with its surroundings, while it attacked vital spots with the hard end of its long tongue. And there was also the Doping Bee. The doping bee has a body colored red and purple. It's poisonous, and when I saw a zombiefied doping bee, I couldn't help but break out cold sweat.

The doping bee is an A Rank magical beast. But unless its nest is attacked, it won't go out of its way to attack humans. Its individual strength isn't much either. In fact, its fighting prowess isn't much different from that of a normal bee. At most it's only really a pain to kill since it's small and fast. And if one adequately prepared for it, then it's possible to defeat them even as an E Rank adventurer.

As for why a magical beast like that was classified as A Rank, well that's because of the doping bee's poison and mode of life. The doping bee's poison has the effect of strengthening the body of magical beasts as well as making them go feral.

In exchange for its lack of power, it has the ability to strengthen other magical beasts with its poison. It's a kind of magical beast that makes use of other magical beasts to protect their nest. I did wonder at first whether the berserked magical beasts would be a danger to the nests as well, but apparently, because of the poison, the beasts won't attack their nest.

In addition, the doping bee's needle and honey can be turned into various medicines, making them highly profitable. But because it's not possible to go around the nests of doping bee's without risking one to death at the hands of one of their guardian magical beasts, there's not much of their needles and honey being sold.

Then again, they're not even the sort of magical beast that lie in limited places, so it's not even possible to plan ahead. Consequently, their nests and magical beasts that have been stabbed by their needles are rarely s

Because of that, adventurers rush in droves whenever a magical beast that has been affected by their poison is spotted. Speaking of which, the way to identify whether a magical beast has been affected by the doping bee's poison is to look at their eyes and the place where they were stabbed. Their eyes should have an abnormal congestion in it. And the place they were stabbed should have a vivid violet speck on it.

The doping bees here have all lost their special abilities though. They've all been zombiefied so it's not really strange. Even if they were still alive, their poison wouldn't work on zombies. So in the end there's still no problem.

"Right now, it's the raptors who's a pain and not the doping bees." {Ryouma}

Zombie raptors have lost their intelligence and can no longer fight as a group, but their agility remains strong, making them faster than the ghouls.

The sun has also set… I guess it can't be helped. I fired Light Shot in all four directions, quickly blowing away the undead in the surrounding area. And then——

"'Holy Space' 'Dimension Home'" [Ryouma]

Using the Holy Space that I had directly learned from Remiri-san, I created a safe area. Afterwards, I brought out the light slimes and the grave slimes.

"I didn't bring them out before because it would make our pace too slow. But since I'm not moving anymore, I decided to let them show their strength." [Ryouma]

After that… well it turned into a fixed operation.

The grave slimes used Attract Ghosts to lure the enemies, and swallow them. While the light slimes dealt with the violent ones with their light magic. When non-undead magical beasts came around, I protected the slimes while subjugating all of them.

Dealing with the undead wasn't a problem, but there were many amongst the undead that went wild. The undead here were much more resistant to Attract Ghosts than the ones in the Town of Departed Spirits.

I'm a bit concerned, but oh well. It's already dark, so I decided to retire for the day.

I hope I can get to Cormi Village by tomorrow.

Chapter 39

Fifth Day

A night passed after getting rid of the horde of undeads. And when morning came, I once again made way for Cormi Village, battling the undead as I went along. As I got closer to the village, the atmosphere became gloomy like that in the previous labyrinth. It doesn't have the same feeling of magic power being gathered, but it felt peculiarly stagnated.

After walking for a bit more, the walls of Cormi Village finally entered my sight. But instead of entering right away, I used the dark magic, Hide, and hid my presence. Then I climbed up a nearby large tree, and took a peek at the other side of the wall.

"Didn't know Cormi Village would be so big. From what I can see, it's square shaped, and each side is about 400 meters long. There are plenty of villages bigger than this outside the Great Forest of Shurus, but it's still massive compared to the camps."

This village should've been built sturdily, but after becoming an abandoned village, even its sturdily built gate has fallen. And although it should've only had one entrance, because the walls have also crumbled in some areas, anyone can now freely enter the village.

Weeds could be seen growing uninhibited past the village walls where undead jostled about freely. While above them, in the sky, were fraids of wraiths floating about as they pleased.

"…Horrible… To think it was actually because of the village that there were so many undead in the area." [Ryouma]

After observing for a bit, I came to understand that the skeletons, the zombies, and other human-shaped undead would create traps, and then hunt preys which they would then bring to their village. It's still morning, so they're only hunting from time to time, but once night hits, they'll probably start hunting vigorously.

The hunted preys are gathered in the centermost plaza-like area where it is then distributed, and then eaten. It wouldn't have been strange for the undead to just eat as they caught, but for whatever reason, they're gathering their food in one place first before eating.

And because they're gathering their preys and leaving it in the village, undead would sometimes be born out of the pile of corpses. It's not really all that strange for the corpses to turn undead though, considering the state of all those corpses.

"And because of that the numbers ended up that many; what a pain…" [Ryouma]

No matter how you look at it, that's a lot of undead. There's about 700 of them, and that's only from what I can see right now. There should still be zombiefied small beasts that are hiding in the weeds, or in the fallen walls or in the shadows of other undead. And on top of their numbers, the undead that go out to hunt are also stronger than the ghouls as they are wearing armors and swords.

But if I were to honestly say it, I think it's a doable fight. Only, their numbers are too great, so I'm worried I might run out of magic power and stamina in the heat of battle. Should I just whittle them down then? Or should I after all try to kill them all in one gulp?

After some time of strategizing, I finally decided to fight the undead during the afternoon when they won't be able to show their full abilities. And in the case where I am unable to defeat them in one day, I will retreat, and hide within my Dimension Home until the night passes. Upon which, I will then resume my attack.

Aside from the fact that I have something to do in the village, it also doesn't seem like it'll be possible for me to avoid fighting the undead. So in that case, I might as well reduce their numbers here, and ensure a smooth retrieval of my inheritance.

And besides… no one in this world wishes for someone to turn undead after passing away. There are also people who considers turning undead after death to be a humiliation, so defeating the undead here can be thought of as a form of memorial service. And considering how it's highly probable that the human-type

undead here are the former residents of this village, it's all the more reason that I can't just leave them here like this.

Fortunately, I have the slimes to rely on, and I also have Remiri-san's light magic to aid me. On top of that, I've also prepared a number of unique and improved anti-undead magic. And although I'd normally be anxious of running out of magic power because of the power and scope of my magic, I don't have to defeat all of the undead in one day this time, so that's not an issue either.

There are no humans who live in this sort of environment either, so…

"I guess I'll throw 'em a barrage of magic the whole day then." [Ryouma]

As I muttered that to myself, I began the operation.

First, I jumped down the tree, then I closed in to the gate in one breath. There, I fired off two shots of Light Shot at the five undead that were keeping watch at the village gate. The undead keeping watch were all human-type, so they all vanished upon contact with Light Shot.

"'Holy Space' 'Light Shot'" [Ryouma]

I casted Holy Space by the gate, and then fired off a shot of Light Shot to restrain the undead that noticed me.

Being surrounded would be problematic, so to avoid that I casted that Holy Space to block the gate. Of course, I could still be surrounded if the undead exited the village from somewhere else, but I'll just think about that when the time comes. For now, it's enough that I've made it harder for them to surround me.

"Then once the undead have clumped up nicely… 'Holy Flame Carpet' !!" [Ryouma]

As I chanted that, a great, bright flame appeared from my hands. It turned into a ball of flame, and it shot toward the undead before me. The raptors that were above the ball of flame's course, lost their lower bodies. And when the ball of flame hit the ground, the flames spread, and a great number of undead were burnt away. But the flames did not cease there as it caught onto the weeds, spreading the flame, and burning even more undead.

This magic is something I came up with after combining the intermediate flame magic I learned from Rheinbach-sama, 'Flame Carpet', and the spell, 'Exorcism' that was directly transmitted to me by Remiri-sama, on the way back home from the Town of Departed Spirits.

Flame Carpet is a kind of magic that spreads a thin layer of flame-attribute magic power to attack one's foe. The flame birthed is a result of magic power, so it can be used even in rocky places with no flammable objects. But in a place like this one where flammable objects like weeds are growing abound, the effect is intensified.

I can easily visualize this spell by imagining the picture of spilled alcohol being lit up. Then on top of that image, I would imagine the light from the flames to have the effect of Exorcism, making this spell the first of my anti-undead area magic attacks. The downside to this spell is that it's difficult to control, so one cast will consume up to 40,000 magic power, but its strength is unquestionable. And right now, that effect can be seen as all the undead within an area of 60m from the gate has been annihilated. Even the wraiths floating in the sky have been reduced to some extent.

It was already hard to combine two spells with differing attributes into one, but combining light magic with another attribute was especially difficult. I think I'll investigate why after this. Oh, incidentally, I used the food of the grave slimes and the undead that they have stored in them as test subjects when I was making this spell.

"'Dimension Home'" [Ryouma]

I brought out some light slimes and grave slimes from the Dimension Home. Then as the grave slimes gathered the undead, I took a look at the situation.

I was anxious about the fire spreading due to the sparks, but it seems there weren't any problems. That's probably because the humidity here in the Great Forest of Shurus is high. As for the fire spreading inside the village… I don't really mind. That aside, the fire catching onto the weeds here and burning it was a huge boon. Because now I can see the small undead easily.

When I saw undead coming again, I fired off my magic.

"'Flash Grenade'" [Ryouma]

As I chanted that, I fired off a ball of light toward the sky. Then I closed my eyes and covered them with one of my hands. In the next instant, the ball of light exploded, releasing magic power and light. The momentary light shot off by that ball dyed my closed sight in red.

The magic I had used just now might look no different from a normal Light Ball, but it's actually a successfully improved version of the Light Shot. If I were to put it in simple words, it's a bomb of light.

It explodes with light-attribute magic power, so it's potent against undead. It may have a wide area of effect, but it's magic power consumption is only half that of the Holy Flame Carpet, putting it at a consumption of 20,000 magic power points. Its downsides are that its effect can be weakened by hiding beneath the shade of a shelter and that the light emitted is too strong, so if you look straight into it, you'll be blinded temporarily. One day, I plan to combine this spell with the wind magic, 'Sound Boom', to create the magic, Stun Grenade, but I'll put that off for later.

Going back to the topic…

The Flash Grenade seems to have worked well as the undead, especially the fraids of wraiths in the sky, have had their numbers greatly reduced. I actually didn't really know how effective the spell would be when I closed my eyes, but it looks like it worked well. I should probably think of a way to make a pair of sunglasses when I get back. I mean it's not exactly a good thing to close one's eyes during battle… as necessary as it may be.

As I was thinking that to myself, it suddenly hit me.

Wait a moment…? I was being cautious because their numbers were great, but now that I'm fighting them, it's actually easier than I thought… There are undead, but they're not attacking me that hard. Rather… they're not really resisting much.

"…Could it be that they're just many, but are actually really weak?" [Ryouma]

I took a look at them again, and I noticed that their movements individually were actually worse than the undead in the Town of Departed Spirits. On top of that, there weren't any higher classes among them.

Somehow it feels like I got too fired up, and ended up striking against the air… I wasted my magic power…

After thinking that, I brought out the king scavenger slimes and the grave slimes, and had them proactively hunt the undead.

The result was just as I expected. The undead in the village were weak enough that it was enough for me to leave them to the slimes. I was using the undead in the Town of Departed Spirits as a standard, but it would appear that the undead there are far stronger than the ones here. It's probably because the magic power there is thick that the undead there are so strong.

And although the intellizombies here are quite numerous, the memories they possess is a far cry from back when they were alive. They were probably brawny warriors back when they were still alive as they can still use short swords after turning into zombies and skeletons, but… they're not much of a threat. Even the strong ones among them are only about as strong as ghouls at most.

And then there are even undead that won't do anything unless you lured them out, and would just sit somewhere as if they were in their house. Surprisingly, those types were actually much more resistant to Attract Ghosts than the undead walking outside. I guess they're much closer to wandering ghosts or bound ghosts than they are to magical beasts.

When I realized that, I shook off the thought of fighting them, and I decided to treat this purely as a form of memorial service to them. I decided to defeat all the undead here while praying for their happiness in the next world. Originally, I was thinking of defeating the undead here first, but I changed my mind. I'll go ahead and get my inheritance first. After all, even if I got surrounded, it wouldn't matter as the slimes are around, so I might as well deal with them later. I also want to spend more time for their memorial service, so finishing my business first will be best.

I walked toward the direction of my grandparent's house. I do want to take a break, but if I'm going to be taking a break then I might as well take a break in my grandparent's house instead of the public plaza.

Like this I walked toward my grandparent's house while praying for the welfare of the undead in their next

lives.

I had my slimes encircle me as we passed by a path overgrown with grass. We also passed over some bent spiked-fences. The fences were stretched around inside the village, so they must have been put up to stop magical beasts that have already invaded the village.

But in one side of the fences was a large building with traces of divisions and, although already mostly ruined, was a small house with many divisions. The spiked-fences were also there in the divisions of the small house, so I guess they weren't put up just to stop invading magical beasts.

After a bit more of walking, I finally arrived to the western edge of the village. My grandparent's house was situated somewhat separate from the other houses.

"So this is the house of the Sage and the Martial God… Although it's not all bad, it doesn't look like the house two amazing people would live in." [Ryouma]

It might look somewhat big from the outside, but in the end, it's a plain, square-shaped house with five chimneys.

Its walls are made out of rock, while its roof and windows are made out of wood. Overall, it looks like a house that was carved out of a rock. Chances are my grandparents used earth magic to create this house. Similar to the other areas of the village, this house has also been overgrown with weed. There are even vines twined around its walls.

The house looked worn-out, but when I touched it, its walls were surprisingly rigid, not moving one bit. It's been left all alone for so long, yet it still feels safe.

I entered the building while keeping wary of the undead.

When I entered, the floors creaked. The floors were also made out of wood, so its deterioration wasn't something unexpected.

"It's probably a good idea not to be too rough here considering the state of the flooring…" [Ryouma]

As I muttered that to myself, I searched the house. For the meantime, it looks like there're no undead here.

There was nothing at all in the building. Places that would normally be expected to have something were completely empty. It was as if a robber had gone in and ransacked the whole place. At most, the only things that I could find were broken objects.

"The closet should at least have clothes, so I guess the people here took it away after my grandparents died. Did they take even the beds too? They thoroughly emptied the place, didn't they?" [Ryouma]

I muttered that to myself, reporting the situation out loud, as I walked through the house until I finally reached my goal.

"It's here." [Ryouma]

It was one of the rooms of the building. Inside, broken medicine cabinets and desks could be seen, along with three hearths with differing sizes lined up. It was my grandparent's laboratory. This is the room where my grandmother, the sage, concocts medicine. Out of the five chimneys that could be seen from outside, three of them are connected to the hearths here. The remaining two are connected to the kitchen and the smithy that my grandfather uses.

I walked toward the middle hearth, the biggest of the group, and I took down the cauldron that was big enough for a plump man to fit into easily. I then scraped out the ashes and cinders that have piled up to reveal the bottom of the hearth.

When I did so, a circular outline with two ditches over its flat surface entered my sight. This is the entrance to the hidden area where my inheritance is.

As I inched into the hearth, I stuck out my hands into the two ditches, curving my fingers inside. Then reinforcing my body with qi gong, I pulled it up open.

The interior of the hearth's bottommost area made a scraping sound as I pulled that circular outline up. And

after I had brought it up all the way up my thighs, I was finally able to completely pull out that cylindrical stone flooring. When I left that outside the hearth, and took a look down the now open floor, what I saw was a wide passage underground.

It was dark, so I shot a Light Ball down.

"About 3 meters until the bottom, huh? The surrounding area down there seems to be completely made out of stone with dents here and there, so… there should be more than enough space for my hands and feet for me to climb down." [Ryouma]

I threw a burning cloth down the passage, and I watched it burn until it completely burned up. After confirming that there's air down the hole, I used wind magic to provide ventilation for myself, and then I climbed down it.

Gayn only gave me information up to this passage here, so I don't know what to expect once I get down. He did however mention there being no traps, but…. just in case, I better proceed with caution.

When I reached the bottom of the hole, what greeted me was a normal passageway. I walked through the passage while lighting up the path with light magic. After a few seconds passed, I stumbled onto a wide room.

Inside were bookshelves packed with books, casks spilling with weapons, and boxes and pouches whose contents were unidentifiable from a glance. Then between me and all those things stood a stone table. On top of it was an object that resembled a thin book.

When I grabbed that object, and took a peek at it, I quickly found out that it wasn't a book, but several letters all bundled up together. The first half of the letters spoke of the basic details surrounding the village, as well as the reason why they lived here.

My grandparents were widely renowned as great warriors and magicians, causing nobles and merchants from all over to pester them to work for them. They received all sorts of requests from legal to illegal, and my grandparents eventually grew sick of it.

Fed up with the ceaseless pestering of the nobles and merchants, they finally decided to run away. They searched for a place where they could easily get medicinal ingredients that at the same time could not be easily accessed by other people. And so, they decided to enter the Great Forest of Shurus where they later reached this village.

This village was originally created by the country to be used in the expedition to reach the center of the forest and in the securing of additional resources. Because of that it was different from the other camps, and was not only used for resting. The country brought many armor and weapon craftsmen, doctors, and servants, making them all work hard in a large-scale construction to create a powerful base that would become the cornerstone in the expedition to the centermost area of the forest.

However, due to the many powerful magical beasts such as the undead snake living in the center, the plan was setback. The many adventurers and slaves that came with those adventurers, however, remained.

Owing likely due to the harsh environment, most of the people in the village were either craftsmen or servants. Then in order to make back the money wasted when the plan failed, the country sold away a part of the slaves along with the facilities and magic barriers to the adventurers.

After that, this village was officially used not as a village but as a stopping point for adventurers to collect herbs and medicines. The management was mostly done by the adventurers themselves in order to suit their own conveniences. Eventually, since even the people living in the village stopped needing to pay tax, the village was given autonomy.

After some time, powerful, but wicked adventurers started to gather. Each one had their own reasons, but regardless, people that sought refuge from the public eye started to gather. Many months and years passed, and the village eventually created its own laws and social classes.

A person's standing was decided mainly by his strength. Matters such as lineage mattered not. But of course, that didn't mean that a person could do as he pleased just because he was strong and managed to become the village chief. But if one could contribute much to the defense of the village or to the revenue of the village, then one would be guaranteed an uninhibited life in the village.

That also goes to mean that the weak cannot survive in the village unless protected by the strong. Due to this, the weak have no choice but to submit to the strong, and do all their bidding. When my grandparents saw that, they felt pity for the people with low statuses, and they started thinking of a way to better their lives.

But the village chief then has always been in a position close to the top of the hierarchy, and he considered the treatment of the lower classes normal. He didn't think there to be anything strange with the way the villagers treated their lesser men.

The village chief and my grandparents could not come to a resolution, so the village chief said this: if you're unsatisfied, then go and make a lot of money. If you do, I'll consider doing something about the way the lesser people are treated. My grandparents agreed to that, and so my grandmother began her research on medicine, and she started treating the sick villagers, while my grandfather supported her.

Frankly speaking, I thought my grandparents lived a harsh life, but according to them, it wasn't harsh at all.

According to the letter, my grandparents were stronger than anyone else in the village. And it reads here: "Money is easy to make. Just go to the center area of the Great Forest of Shurus, and collect some herbs. Then for the testing, well… there were plenty of subjects."

There probably wasn't a place more suited to my grandparents as this place here. Not only is it possible to hide away from the public here, but it's also easy to get medicinal ingredients.

"…They made medicines and even took care of the people. They must have been nice people… although they do seem to be a bit different from normal people though." [Ryouma]

That's about it for the first half of the letter. The rest talks about their will.

Reading the letter, it reads: to the person who is reading this now —— …well, to make things short, they're saying that they will be giving me everything that is in this room.

The things in this room are all near the end of their life span, so they can't really be used anymore. But the money here along with the other things are all things that they acquired in their adventures together as husband and wife. These things all have sentimental value to them, so they hid it here, and did not want the village chief to find it. For some reason though, they could not dispose it.

They hoped that someone who was not affiliated with the village would find these things. Several lines in the letter also mention that the magic tool inside the box here in the room is something that they found in some ruins.

"Teagle-san, thank you. I will carry on your legacy. Melia-san, as well, thank you. I will be sure to continue the research that you have left. May you two find peace in your sleep." [Ryouma]

I spoke those words after I finished reading the letter. Then I faced toward the letter and the inheritance, and I offered a silent prayer.

After which, I then took all of the inheritance in the room, and I stored them all within my Dimension Home. I'll check the contents later.

Chapter 40

When I got back up to ground level, I blocked the entrance leading down the underground tunnel with a rock just as it were before. And just as I thought of stepping out of the laboratory to breathe in some fresh air, a creaking sound resounded from around my feet. Immediately after, my balance broke.

"Uwaah!?" [Ryouma]

…I had apparently stepped through the flooring…

This place's dangerous, I better get out quick.

As I thought that, I went out of the house, and immersed myself in the atmosphere outside before going into my Dimension Home. There, I checked the contents of my inheritance, and I saw that there were two jute bags of differing sizes, a barrel filled with all sorts of weapons, and four metal boxes that's each barely big enough for an adult to carry with his arms spread. I also from some inheritance from the shelves, but there was no need to check, as I already knew that the contents are roughly around 100 books. They're shelves after all. What else would you put in them?

"Well, I better check the barrel spilling with weapons first then. Although, I don't think I can expect much from this one." [Ryouma]

The weapons inside the barrel are all rusted. Most likely because they've been left for far too long down there in the basement. After carefully inspecting the weapons, I found out that only eight were not rusted.

Three of those were swords, two spears, two axes, and one hammer. They're all first class weapons, so putting the sword and the spear aside, the axe and the hammer should sell well. I'm selling them since neither I nor my slimes can use them.

"Next up are the jute bags." [Ryouma]

I looked inside a jute bag, and I found out that the first jute bag was filled with magic jewels. The attributes are: neutral, water, earth, wood, poison, and even light.

"Light attribute? Isn't that a rare magic jewel? Sure, there might not be a lot of them, but it's still amazing… I don't really have any way of using them right now, but I'll keep them around for use in something like making a staff later." [Ryouma]

As I said that, I opened the next bag. This bag is far smaller compared to the other bag. In fact, it looks like the sort of bag you'd get when buying lunch. Inside the bag were three metal ingots of different varieties. I thought about it for a while until I eventually concluded that I don't know what type of ingots these are. Judging from their tint though, they might be the usual iron, silver, or copper ingots that are commonly used.

For the meantime, I took out one ingot, and used Identify on it. When the results came, I was shocked. So shocked I almost dropped the ingot.

The results of Identify are as follows:

Mythril Ingot

The resulting product after refining an ore of mythril, purifying it, and turning it into an ingot.
Although it's metal, it's light, and easily allows magic to pass through it. Its downside is the difficulty involved in working with it.

Fantasy metal has come!!

So this is mythril… If I were to use this to make a weapon, would I end up with a weapon that's convenient to use magic battle technique with? The slime katana I'm using now is fine, but I'm a bit curious.

Anyway, let's leave this here for now, and check the other ingots. The next ingot I took out was black and heavy…

Adamantite Ingot
The resulting product after refining an ore of adamantite, purifying it, and turning it into an ingot.

It is extremely durable and highly resistant to corrosion. Its downsides are its heavy weight and the difficulty in manufacturing it. Magic also has difficulty passing through it.

This is also a fantasy metal. I could use this to make either weapons or armors. I think I can also use it to make staves, although that doesn't seem to be a good idea. Unless I'm making a staff for hitting people with that is. But in that case, I might as well go ahead and make a mace instead.

Well, let's leave this one here too, and go to the next one. The ingot this time is different from the other two in that it's about half their size and is dazzling gold. This wouldn't be a gold bar, would it?

After investigating, it was, just as I expected, also a fantasy metal.

Orichalc um Ingot
The resulting product after refining an ore of orichalc um, purifying it, and turning it into an ingot. A type of metal that is highly durable and highly conductive to magic. Mining rates are extremely low, and manufacturing is equally difficult.

So after mythril and adamantite is orichalc um, huh? Well it's the inheritance from the Martial God and the Sage after all, so something of this level probably isn't strange. I am surprised, but that can't really be helped.

Also, this is something I learned from the Digger Arms shop in Gimuru, but apparently, regardless of which of these three metals is used, the resulting weapon will at least be several small platinum coins' worth.

"These fantasy metals… could it be? Were these things dug up from somewhere here in the Great Forest?" [Ryouma]

As I was thinking that, I heard something sound out from inside the bag. It was then that I realized that there was a sheet of paper in the bag. On that paper was something that appeared to be a map of sorts drawn by my grandfather. It's mostly faded out, but at the bottom it reads:

"These are all I have at hand. If you want more, go get them yourself."

Looks like this map lead to the cave where mythril, adamantite, and orichalc um can be excavated. Although it's certainly great that he told me the location of those precious metals, but unfortunately, I can't really be happy about it right now.

"Normally I would, but unfortunately, I can't go right now…" [Ryouma]

The end of the trail on the map drawn is undoubtedly the centermost area of the Great Forest of Shurus. It's too bad, but I'm not strong enough to plunge into a den crawling with magical beasts like the undead snake yet. Or rather, did grandpa actually treat going to a place like that as if he was walking in a park? Looks like the name, Marital God, isn't just for who, huh?

"In any case, it's not something necessary right now, so I better put it off for now. At the very least, until when I'm able to deal with an undead snake without relying on the bloody slimes. Right, let's go with that." [Ryouma]

I carefully put away the map.

"Well then, let's pull ourselves together, and let's go see what's inside the box. If I recall correctly, the letter mentioned it having magic tools inside." [Ryouma]

I opened the boxes, and three out of four of them were filled with books and magic tools for compounding medicines. The last box was a jumbled mess of various objects.

Grandma's books and tools were neatly kept inside the first three boxes, but the last box was a mess. I couldn't tell which was which.

After taking a better look at the contents of the last box, I found out that it was mostly filled with tableware and seemingly inexpensive accessories… Ah, there seems to be some gold in between the gaps of all the stuff stuffed in the box too… How to put it, this box feels like the 'just stuff whatever ya want into' sort of box. These things are all most likely things that have some sentimental value to my grandparents.

After investigating the boxy further, it came to me that the contents of the box and the number of things in it don't match. There are actually enough objects in it to fit a box three times its size. And taking a closer look, I can see that the things in it don't appear to have been left alone for long.

For example, there is a small emerald ring inside the box, but the jewel doesn't show any signs of deterioration. And compared to the faded letters and maps in the previous bag, and the faded books in the shelves, the diary-like books in this box doesn't seem to have faded one bit.

"A magic tool that allows more things to be fitted inside than what its exterior would suggest. On top of that, it preserves the contents, keeping them from deteriorating… This… isn't this a really amazing object?" [Ryouma]

There are also magic tools in this world that uses dimension magic, but they are rare even amongst magic tools. As for why it's because there are few enchanters that use dimension magic. But even then, if someone were to enchant an object with dimension magic's Item Box spell, there wouldn't be any effect that would allow its contents to resist the passage of time. Item Box is, after all, only a magic meant to create another space to store objects in.

"When it comes to storing things, there's nothing better than this. I'll put it to good use." [Ryouma]

Moreover, there are even adamantite and mythril weapons at the bottom of the box. Looks like grandpa hid the really good weapons in this box. It feels like a waste to keep the weapons I can't use just hidden, but it would also be a problem if I sold them… If I sell them poorly, I'll end up conspicuous in a bad way after all.

I can just leave things inside this magic tool box since it resists deterioration, but if I do it poorly, I'll end up leaving something in it for a long time just like I did with Melzen's spear… In that case, I better leave the things that I or my slimes can use here, while I sell the long sword and the spear cheap to Asagi-san and Jeff-san, all the while asking them to keep quiet about its origins.

Like this I finished investigating the inheritance, and I left the Dimension Home. Outside, the sun had already set, and the sky had already become a beautiful sunset.

"I guess I'll rest for a bit, and eat supper." [Ryouma]

Also, I might as well study the mimic slime's ecology. Fortunately, there aren't any magical beasts here aside from the undead.

As I thought that to myself, I grew livelier, and I took out the mimic slime from the Dimension Home.

First, I need to know what it eats, so I ordered a grave slime to release its caught preys. When I met the mimic slime for the first time, it tried to eat me, so it must be a predator. But I'll prepare some vegetables and poisonous plants as well.

After inquiring whether it could only eat one or the other, I understood that it could eat either meat or vegetables. Apparently the mimic slime is an omnivore. However, it can't eat the rotten meat of the undead-type magical beasts. It also can't eat poisonous plants. Its eating habits are mostly similar to that of a human's.

On top of these facts, I also discovered something interesting. When I had confirmed that the mimic slime ate meat, I prepared raptor and galmos alligator meat. The mimic slime jumped at the galmos alligator meat, and it started feasting on it.

After it finished eating, the mimic slime suddenly began to transform into a galmos alligator!

"So the mimic slime's Mimic is also related to its diet! Does Mimic activate when it eats its prey? If so, then how necessary is eating to Mimic?" [Ryouma]

As I thought that, I tested it out by pulling a strand of hair from my head, and having the mimic slime eat it. But then it appeared that the mimic slime couldn't Mimic with just this. In that case, I'll have to increase the amount.

I opened my Item Box, and I took out a pair of scissors I use for sweing. I then cut my bangs and the hair reaching to the back of my neck. My hair has also grown out quite a bit, so this much should be fine. But if I need to shave myself bald then I'll have to do that after I get back to Gimuru.

It's because this body is still only 12 years old, so I'm not growing any beard yet. Because of that, I don't have a razor with me. Besides, it would be strange if I suddenly came back bald. Shaved head and skinheads do exist in this country, but they aren't common. Even if you walk throughout the twon, you'll barely see anyone with those hair styles. The country to the south seems to have a fair number though. But in any case, that sort of style is rarely seen in this country.

A-Also, if I have to feed the hair on my limbs to the slime, then I'll just give up on it. As one would expect, I'm not willing to shave my body that much just to experiment.

It would be great if it could Mimic with just these. As I thought that, I fed the mimic slime the hair I had cut. When I did, the mimic slime slowly began to transform into me. It succeeded! However…

"Why are you naked!?" [Ryouma]

Wai! I know it's not me, and there's no one around, but it's still embarrassing! Why are you naked!? Weren't you wearing an armor when you were transformed into that man from before!?

"But, in any case, go put on some clothes now!" [Ryouma]

Panicked, I quickly took out a pair of pants and shirt from my Item Box, and handed them over to the mimic slime. The mimic slime slowly extended its hands, but as it began to walk, it fell over.

"Why!?"

I ran up to the mimic slime, and checked on it, and I found out there that it wasn't feeling unwell or anything. Just that it can't stand, and the most it can do is roll about.

A few hours passed after that, and after much investigation, I found out that although the mimic slime had succeeded in transforming into me, it couldn't even walk. Much time might be needed to allow it familiarize itself with the body it transformed into.

"Is that the reason why when it pretended to be a human and attacked me, the movements it used when it attacked was not something that belonged to a human? But I really don't want to see myself completely naked under the sun, struggling like a newly born child… Fortunately, no one else saw it." [Ryouma]

Speaking of which, right after that, I had the mimic slime put on some clothes. Or rather, I had it eat some clothes, and then had it transform its body's surface into clothes. It succeeded well too. Whether it was the appearance of the clothes or the texture, it was a perfect replication. Truly a fearful LV 10 Mimic.

Only, it couldn't transform back into me after I had it cancel the transformation. That's most likely because its Mimic Memory skill level is too low. The slime might have to put it to memory first before it's able to transform at will.

As I continued thinking like that, the sky finally began to turn dark. So I entered the Dimension Home, and began to prepare supper.

"The menu for today is bread and… Oh, right, let's go with that." [Ryouma]

I had the grave slime bring out the undead snake that I recently defeated. I then cut its headless body apart, removing its hide and its bones. I then cut it into thin, long strips, and then fried it.

According to what I had researched before, the undead snake is a nutritious treat to eat as its regeneration ability allows its body to store up plenty of nutrients. I also heard that it's delicious thanks to its fatty meat. Because of all that, I decided to try eating it.

A few seconds after I had begun frying it, oil started to drizzle out of its meat. Then gradually, scent similar to that of fried chicken filled the Dimension Home.

"Looks delicious." [Ryouma]

To think it would actually make such a delicious smell… It would've been great if I had remembered earlier…

Without adding anything onto it, I took a bite out of the now cooked snake meat. When I did, my teeth easily sunk into the soft meat, and juices gushed out of the meat, filling my mouth with its taste.

"Ohh, it's delicious! It's plenty juicy, and there's also enough umami. Come to think of it, I think I also heard of the undead snake meat being good ingredients for tonics and beautifying the body. Speaking of beauty, I wonder if it's because of the collagen texture? I've never had collagen pot, so I don't know, but… well, it's delicious and safe to eat, so whatever." [Ryouma]

As I thought that, I fried more meat to eat. The meat is plenty delicious, so just a little salt and seasoning is good enough. Today's menu is bread and grilled undead snake salad.

Moreover, I also cut apart the undead snake body that had regenerated from just its head. I grilled that one with salt too, and I fed it to the slimes. When I tasted it, I noticed that its quality had gone down. It must be because it had used its regenerative enegies that its meat had grown dry and hard. It didn't taste as good too. Well, although it doesn't taste as good, it's still plenty delicious though. It does feel a bit lacking compared to the meat I had just tasted a while ago though.

The slimes ate the snake meat happily. The mimic slime also couldn't use Mimic after eating the fried meat. Mimic might require raw meat, I'll have to investigate this more later.

Chapter 41

The Next Day

I began filling in the hole in the wall of the village with earth magic, repairing it and reinforcing it. While I also began to demolish the structures within the city walls.

Fixing the wall is to prevent magical beasts from entering after I send off the undead, and create a safe area within the forest. The demolishing of the buildings is to ensure that I don't miss any undead.

Besides, they were all so worn out that they would crumble after just breaking two or three pillars anyway. They were pretty much useless except for the undeads who would hide them, so burning them down isn't really a hard decision to make.

When I went to clear out the village, I started by investigating each house. performing a memorial service for the undead as I did. The first division I got to was a dense collection of several small houses, so I took them down one by one, then I burned them with Holy Flame Carpet, cleaning up the wreckage. In the end, I decided to do the same, and clean out the rest of the village in the same way.

The undead that came attacking at me were all mostly taken care of by the grave slimes, the king scavenger slimes, and the light slimes. All the while, I demolished the buildings with the help of the earth slimes and the wind slimes.

The village is a bit too big for me to do everything by myself, but with the help of the slimes, I figured I could finish everything within a few days.

As the operation gradually progressed, I eventually neared the limits of my magic power. I randomly took breaks as I kept going until eventually dusk came.

"I guess I'll end things here for the day… Oh, right!" [Ryouma]

Abruptly, I opened my Item Box, and from it I took out the guitar that I haven't used in a while. Then I began my preparations to play the guitar and sing, chantlessly casting dark magic as I play.

It's started to get dark, so I decided to stop the operation for the day, but just a little, I thought I'd use the remaining magic power I have, and practice the Cursed Song I coincidentally learned in the past.

If you're wondering why I suddenly thought of doing something like this now, well it's because I'm really bad at using this Cursed Song magic, and yet I haven't practiced it at all. I did investigate the spell after learning it, but that's about all I did.

Funny thing about this spell is that its good part is the same as its bad part, both being its area of effect.

It has a wide area of effect as it works as long as you can hear it, but because of that…

"I can't choose the target. Which goes to mean that it's an attack that doesn't discriminate between foe or ally…" [Ryouma]

Fortunately, though, the slimes can't hear, and the rimel birds can block off the sound with wind magic, so it doesn't affect them.

But if I were to use the skill at the wrong place, then there's a possibility that I might affect the people passing by. I also didn't learn the spell because I need it, so because of all those reasons, I didn't practice it at all. I don't know if I can do something about its indiscrimination by practicing it, but I at least hope to be able to reduce its area of effect. There's no one around here, so I might as well take this opportunity to practice it to my heart's content.

As I focused, I began playing the guitar as I sang the theme song of an anime I had heard in my previous life.

But not long after, I had to stop.

"What's going on!?" [Ryouma]

When I started to use Cursed Song, the apathetic undead in the surrounding area suddenly started hurrying toward me. Seeing that, I immediately had the slimes prepare for battle as I pulled out my katana.

"…Huh? They're not coming anymore?" [Ryouma]

When I stopped using Cursed Song, the undead suddenly lost all interest, and they scattered away.

"Could it be?" [Ryouma]

I tried playing the guitar again as I used Cursed Song, and the undead all came hurrying toward me again. And when I stopped, they scattered away. I tried playing the guitar again, singing normally without using Cursed Song, and they didn't come, so in other words…

"The Cursed Song has an effect similar to the grave slimes' Attract Ghosts?" [Ryouma]

I unexpectedly discovered an effect of Cursed Song in an unlikely place. But while it's great that I discovered something new, with this I won't be able to practice here anymore…

"Guess I'll have no choice but to practice in the abandoned mine once I get back home… Well, I won't be going on trips for a while once I get back anyway, so I guess I'll take my time then." [Ryouma]

The undead suddenly rushing toward me kind of sucked all my strength away, so I think I'll just go have supper, and rest now.

Day 2 of the Operation

I performed a memorial service for the undead that we lured yesterday. We also somehow managed to finish clearing out the section with many small houses before noon. Then after lunch, we dealt with the houses that were relatively big. Amongst those, many were either workshops or storehouses

There were many bound ghosts in them too. For example, there was this skeleton that's probably a former black smith as he would lean over the hearth, and smash a rusted hammer against a rusted anvil ceaselessly. Those sort of ghosts never paid me attention even when I entered their workshop. But because of the sounds they made, they were easy to find.

After that, I entered the large houses. When I did, I understood that there were two different types of large house.

On one hand, you have the housing complexes that worked like apartments or inns. And were probably inhabited by people who can fight as weapons and armors could be seen littered all over the place. Moreover, there were also undead that could use the weapons quite well, so this hypothesis is probably true.

Then on the other hand, you have the houses of the authorities. These type of large houses had much more things compared to the others. Moreover, there were also undead who would fight while sitting down on a chair as they muttered orders such as 'go protect!' or something.

It's not like the other undead listened to their orders either. After all, there's no one left who could listen to orders anymore, so seeing an undead do that was kind of funny. Although, it also made me feel empty.

After I finished demolishing a few more houses, I neared the limits of my magic power, so I decided to take a break. I spent the break, practicing with several of the weapons I got from my grandpa.

The first thing I practiced with was the mythril spear that dazzled blue when light shone on it. It's light and durable, but more than that, what's really worth mentioning is its conductivity to magic, which makes using magic battle technique with it really easy.

Moreover, when I tried channeling my magic power through the spear to cast a fire ball, I found out that the magic power consumption became smaller. This is supposed to be a spear, so it's probably the mythril that's causing the reduction of magic power consumption.

The next thing I tried out was the thin, black-colored, adamantite rapier. It might look thin, but it's made out of adamantite, so it's a lot heavier than it seems.

I'm not well-versed with rapiers, but I do know that you're supposed to thrust with them, so I practiced with the rapier by thrusting it into the pillars of the house that I haven't demolished yet. When I did, the rapier easily pierced into a wooden pillar.

After that, I tried piercing the wooden pillars and brick walls at full strength with ki reinforcement, and the

rapier didn't bend at all. When I took it a step further, and swept the rapier against the wooden pillar, the pillar was hacked down despite the fact that I was only relying on pure strength. Of course, the blade didn't bend either… Were rapiers meant to be able to cut wooden pillars like this?

The last weapon I tested was the adamantite katana. This one's much more durable and sharp compared to the iron slime blade I normally use. It's undoubtedly an excellent sword. Only, it's quite heavy. I can swing it no problem with qi gong, but it'll be quite exhausting in a long fight, so it's a bit worrying to use. From here on, I should wait for my body to grow while I train myself to build up some muscles.

The Third Day

By noon, most of the memorial service of the villagers had been held. When I took a break, and walked around the village, I took the opportunity to search the area, and I ended up getting some herbs. Unexpectedly, I actually got some pepper that I could use for seasoning.

When I saw the pepper, I couldn't help but raise my voice in delight. Pepper can be bought in the village, and in fact, I have actually bought them many times. But because they're so expensive, they're not something I use on a daily basis.

Buying pepper from a store in the town will cause the food expenditures to rise several times, so it's actually a luxury to use it. I've also gotten used to food without pepper. And besides, I've already been living in this world for four years, so their common sense has already rubbed off on me to some extent.

Sill, I've been using black pepper in my previous life normally, so I personally don't think it's that much of a luxury. But even if I don't consider black pepper itself to be a luxury, since one small bottle goes for a small gold coin - and to add to that - if I were to actually use it as if I was still back in my previous world, I'll end up spending several times worth of a day's living expense. Because of that it does feel somewhat luxurious. I might be making a killing, but it seems I still haven't rid myself of my frugal mentality. Well, it still beasts being a spendthrift though.

"I might be able to solve my black pepper problems if I come here to get some every now and then. I found a good place." [Ryouma]

If you take too much, a new one won't grow again, so it's important not to thoroughly uproot the herbs. I've heard this warning many times. And especially so in the adventurer's guild as they'll tell you the same warning at the reception desk before letting you off.

When I began harvesting, I was, at first, constantly warning myself to be careful, but when I saw how many herbs there were, I changed my mind. It's because there were so many that even if I didn't thoroughly empty the field, I would still have more than enough. Most likely, the amount I take from here will last me enough for the whole year.

Speaking of which, the plants were planted right next to the walls of the village, so it's highly probable that the villagers were cultivating these. And because they all died, no one was left to harvest the herbs, so in the

end, it ended up this many. As of now, there's no one who knows that, so it's a mystery.

Right after finish, I immediately put the black pepper I had gathered to use. I dried the black pepper with alchemy, and then I crushed it. After which, I then ate the meat of the undead snake with salt and black pepper. Because of the tingling taste and smell, the already delicious meat became even more delicious. From now on, my daily food will be quite luxurious.

The Fourth Day

Thanks to the power of magic and the slimes, I was able to somehow finish cleaning Cormi Village. There were no longer any undead inside the village. And even that gloomy atmosphere has been blown away. I also saw that there were magical beasts outside the village. I'm glad I took the time to repair the walls.

As I've taken and burned everything down except for my grandparents' house, the place has mostly become vacant. It's already become an abandoned village, so I think it'll be better if I start referring to this place as the Cormi Village (Formerly). Well, whatever's fine though.

In any case, I've finished what I've come here to do. Let's go back to Gimuru.

I prepared whatever I needed to prepare, then when I went out, I blocked the gate of the village with earth magic. Afterwards, I brought the mimic slime out of the Dimension Home, and I ordered it to use Mimic to transform into a take ostrich.

"I'm relying on you." [Ryouma]

"..Kuke!" [Take Ostrich Slime]

When I called out to the mimic slime, what responded back was the cry of a mimicked take ostrich. Mimic slimes reproduce even the actual body of the creature they are mimicking, so they are able to gain the full five senses when they use Mimic. Because of that, they would sometimes cry out after finishing the task I've given them, seemingly asking, 'what's next'.

Back to the Main Topic

After I had confirmed that the mimic slime was ready, I rode it… Clinging is more fitting though, I suppose.

In these past three days, I've been sending the undead off, and have been cleaning the wreckages. When I finally ran out of magic power, and took a break, I investigated the mimic slimes, and trained them by having them let me ride them. I also rode on them, whenever I went out to get some herbs, creating more opportunities for them to train.

The impetus behind that is that when I saw the mimicked take ostrich running around, I thought to myself, couldn't I ride that? And so, I tested it out, and I found out that the leg strength of the take ostrich was actually really strong. It was able to let me ride it and run fast at the same time. Of course, it was slower than when I wasn't riding it, but it's still plenty fast, so there's no problem on that front.

The feathers of the take ostrich were much softer than I had originally thought it to be. I also didn't receive any discomfort when I rode it. Moreover, the mimic slime was able to make itself bigger with its Enlarge skill, so riding over it was actually quite comfortable. Also, the mimic slime is different from the other slimes in that it can feel fatigue, so I couldn't overdo it. Thanks to the take ostrich, the way back has gotten a lot easier.

"Go!" [Ryouma]

"Kuke!" [Mimicked Take Ostrich]

The take ostrich rocketed off at my words, and it ran like a sprinting horse within the dense forest.

…It's fast, but I'll definitely have to put a saddle over it once I get back. It wouldn't be nice if I fell after all. If this were a horse, I'm confident that I'd be able to find a saddle for it somewhere along the way. But because it's a take ostrich, I'll have to look for a saddle that's meant for ostrich use. If I find one, I'll buy it.

Around an hour after departing.

The magical beasts that attacked me from time to time were paralyzed by my Paralyze Mist and scattered by the speed of the mimic slime, so we haven't stopped at all since we left an hour ago. Around this time, the mimic slime started getting tired, so I let it rest inside the Dimension Home.

I didn't think it would actually be able to keep that pace up while carrying me for an hour. Apparently, I had been underestimating the leg strength of the take ostrich. Their speed isn't just explosive, it can also last for extended periods.

It would normally have taken four hours even without any undead, but thanks to the mimic slime I can now get to the lake now with just a little more walk.

As I thought that, I walked. And when I neared the lake, I noticed the presence and sound of something rampaging. Apparently something was rampaging around the lake. Immediately, I used Hide to hide my presence, then I went out to see what the fuss was about.

What entered my sight were two cannon ball rhinoses. One of them was 2 meters tall and 4 meters long, a cannon ball rhinos with a body bigger than the average cannon ball rhinos. Fighting against that cannon ball rhinos was a tiny, one-meter-tall cannon ball rhinos, that could still be thought of as a child…

…This fight's no good. The bigger cannon ball rhinos isn't moving much, but the smaller one keeps challenging the other cannon ball rhinos only to be blown away. But it won't give up. It stands up immediately after being thrown away, and tries again. The difference in physique is too big, at this rate, the smaller one won't have a chance to win at all.

Still… Why on earth is that small one picking a fight with that big one? It's already wounded all over, and yet it keeps desperately charging against that bigger…!?

As I continued to watch the cannon ball rhinoses, I suddenly felt something fly toward me, aiming for my head. As soon as I felt that something coming at me, I bent my body to dodge it.

What came flying was a tongue that looked like it had a sharp arrowhead attached to it. Following back the direction where it came from, I saw a lone tree from which the tongue could be seen growing on one of its branches.

Unsheathing my sword, I headed toward the tree, and I cut off the place slightly above where the tongue was growing from. When I did so, blood spurted out of a part of the tree, and that something fell to the ground. The true identity of what had gone flying at me was actually the tongue of an anchor chameleon. Apparently, it thought it was a good opportunity to attack as I was caught up watching the cannon ball rhinoses.

Thinking that to myself, I suddenly remembered the cannon ball rhinoses, so I turned to see how they were doing.

"……" [Both Rhinoses]

"Ah"

Our eyes met. Looks like they noticed me when I killed the anchor chameleon… Currently, I am facing toward the two rhinos which are both in front of the lake. The bigger one is situated diagonally to my right, while the smaller one is situated diagonally to my left. They both turned toward me.

…I'm not an enemy, you know~

"KUOoOOoO!!!!!!" [Rhinos]

"Wh–!?" [Ryouma]

After a few moments of silence, the bigger rhinos suddenly took a 180 from its previous behavior as it bellowed out a war cry, and charged toward me.

Not good!

Immediately, I hid myself, and jumped in between the trees, dodging the charge. The bigger rhino that had charged toward me, kept going until it crashed against a tree.

The tree bent at the impact, and large cracks could be seen extending from where the rhinos horn had pierced. Not long after, sounds of breaking apart resounded, and the tree completely fell down, causing the ground to shake.

"I'll definitely dodge it if it comes from the f– woah!" [Ryouma]

That was dangerous!

I had managed to dodge the bigger one, but the smaller one came attacking too!

As I was wondering whether I had to fight them both at the same time, it suddenly occurred to me that there were two cannon ball rhinoses lying down.

For a moment, I braced myself, thinking there were more of them. But not long after, I noticed that they were already dead. From that, I finally understood why the smaller one was picking a fight with the bigger one.

Those two rhinoses were probably the smaller one's parents.

As I was thinking that to myself, the bigger one turned toward me, bellowed out a war cry as it charged toward me again. Stepping to the side, I dodged it. And then just as I tried to slash it——

"!? It's tougher than I thought." [Ryouma]

That pretty much summed up what it felt like when I hit it. Sure, I did hear that its skin was tough, but my ki clad stroke actually couldn't cut through it. All it did was cut through the rhinos' fur, leaving only a shallow cut over the rhinos' body. It didn't even bleed a drop. This is the first time something like this has happened since I got to this world, so I'm a bit surprised.

The attacks of the rhinoses' are linear, so I can just dodge them by sensing the magic power they release before they start the charge. But at the same time, my attacks won't work, so the situation isn't exactly getting any better… There is that adamantite katana I got from grandpa though. Should I try using it?

No, it's dangerous to use an unfamiliar weapon I haven't even practiced with. If it were just a raptor, then it wouldn't matter much, but this are cannon ball rhinoses.

But still… what's up with toughness of their skin? I heard they used neutral magic, but could it be there's also a hardening technique aside from just the strengthening one? Or could it be this hardness is just normal amongst the bodies of the cannon ball rhinoses?

I kept my eyes fixed on the two rhinoses while I continued to think of a way to deal with them

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"Did I overestimate myself? But before that, what should I do about this situation? If I can't pierce into the body, then not even my bloody slime will work. Moreover, aiming at their eyes and mouth requires that I stand right in front of them. If I were to do that, I'd be exposing myself to their charge… Oops." [Ryouma]

As I was thinking to myself how to defeat the bigger one, the smaller one attacked me. Honestly, after understanding the situation, I've lost all will to fight the smaller one…

As I was thinking that, this time the bigger one came to attack me. When I dodged it, the smaller one… Wait, why are you guys focusing on me? You should at least… Oh, right, maybe I could do something if it's the smaller one.

"Haaaaa…" [Ryouma]

Sheathing my katana, I faced my back toward the lake, and I filled my body with ki. Then I stood before the smaller cannonball rhinos.

The cannonball rhinos began to mercilessly charge at me. With a half turn, I dodged the horn of the cannonball rhinos. Then I grabbed its neck, neared my butt to the ground, and I entered the area beneath it. There, I touched the body of the cannonball rhinos with my feet, and with my ki charged, I kicked it up to the sky!

"Leave me alone for a bit!" [Ryouma]
"Kyuon!?" [Little Rhinos]

It was heavy, but I was able to kick the cannonball away. It kept flying as it drew an arc and eventually landed into the lake. Amongst cannonball rhinoses, they have a tendency to accept defeat when they're thrown away by the horn, or pushed down. So I hope the smaller one will stop attacking me with this.

Still… it's fortunate that I used my legs. From the weight I felt when I threw it, I don't think I could have thrown it that far even if I had raised it up with my arms. This lake looks shallow, so I don't think it'll drown… That aside, there's still the problem of the bigger one.

Immediately, I picked myself up. But for some reason, the big cannonball rhinos that was so eager to attack me before was not moving… But just as I was thinking that, the cannonball rhinos suddenly bellowed out a war cry as it charged toward me.

I decided to dodge it and move way from where I threw the smaller one. With my course of action decided, I fired off some magic at the cannonball rhinos to get its attention. Then I unsheathed my katana, wielded it with my right hand, while my left wielded the sheath itself.

Following that, I ordered the big iron slime katana and big metal slime sheath to transform. The form of the katana and the sheath began to melt, turning into liquid as they wrapped themselves over my hand toward my shoulders. When they finished transforming, the smooth, curved metal had completely changed into a scale-like silver and dark grey mittens.

Weapons that can cut have little effect against the hide of these rhinoses, so I'll fight with strikes instead. There's also the chained iron ball that I used to defeat the elder treant, but that one's heavy, so if I were to use that, my movement would get dull. Besides, there're plenty of trees around, it won't be easy to use. Compared to that, this gauntlet might be a little heavier compared to the blade-form of the slimes, but it's easy to use.

"My right might be… short!" [Ryouma]
"O!?" [Rhinos]
"…" [Ryouma]

I dodged the incoming cannonball rhinos, and then landed a strike at its left flank with my fist. My attack seems to have had much more effect compared to the katana as the rhinos let out a little of its voice. It wasn't that loud though, so the effect wasn't all that much.

Part of is it's because it's durable, but it's also because my attack slipped when I attacked it while it was charging. I don't think it did it on purpose, but it still feels like my attack got parried. I guess I should attack it when it stops moving…

I lured the cannonball rhinos into the denser area. If it's inside an area with more trees, it should be harder for it to attack. At least that's what I thought, but then the canon-ball rhinos ignored the trees, and it began charging recklessly.

As sounds resounded and tremors shook the earth, the trees were either bent or mowed down. The instances of the cannonball rhinos stopping also increased. Aiming for those moments, I curled my hand into a fist, and I smashed it against the cannonball rhinos.

Our battle continued like that for a while, but the cannonball rhinos still refused to show any signs of falling over.

"Hmm… On top of the weight of the slimes, there's also the reinforcement from ki. If it was a human I was fighting, his cranium would have caved in at the power ages ago… This is making me lose confidence. This wanton destruction of nature is also making me anxious." [Ryouma]

But still… I wonder if this thing can't feel any pain. I've hit so many times, and it's even crashed itself against so many times. I've even hit it with fire, electric, and ice type magic, but I've only either slightly burned or froze its fur.

I tried making a hole once while I let it crash against the wall erected by Earth Wall, but the hole was too small and too shallow, and the cannonball rhinos just went through the earth wall. All I managed to do was buy some time.

Dark magic works, but then the cannonball rhinos goes even wilder, and it becomes harder to predict how it will attack. Seriously, what am I supposed to do about this? I can stop its movements and buy some time, but my attacks won't work on it, so I can't defeat it.

"GUoOO!!" [Rhinos]
"Tch!" [Ryouma]

After how many times of hitting it with my fists, I realized something strange. This big cannonball rhinos sometimes suddenly stops. At first, I thought it just didn't feel like fighting anymore since it just got hit back whenever it attacked, but then it would persistently start chasing me again. It would've been nice if it started getting a concussion after crashing into trees so many times, but apparently that wasn't the case…

"KUOoOOoO!!!!!!" [Rhinos]

Ahh, it's here again!

"You're persistent! And your eyes are bloodsh—…!!" [Ryouma]

It was here that it came to me that a part of the cannonball rhinos' sclera was oddly congested. Taking note of that, I began observing the rhinos. As the Rhinos bellowed out a cry, I noticed that there were some violet specks inside the mouth of the rhinos. When I saw that, I finally understood the reason behind its behavior. At the same time, I felt my face cramping.

"It's the poison of the doping bee!" [Ryouma]

A queer congestion within the eyes and specks of violet are both special traits of a magical beast that's been pierced by the doping bee. Moreover, when the doping bee's poison has had too much of an effect, the magical beast's consciousness will sometimes become muddied, causing it to be dazed. And the beast will alternate between berserk and being dazed. The interval between the two states doesn't seem to be fixed though.

Took me way too long to remember… If I can't remember my preparatory research during a critical moment, then there's no point in doing it in the first place. I'll have to reflect on this later.

But that's that. At least now I finally know why this thing's going wild, and why it's so strong.

"It's not just strong because of magic. It's strong because the originally A Rank defensive power has been further bolstered… But even if I know that, the situation hasn't changed." [Ryouma]

I could feel drops of sweat forming at my brows. I can't just leisurely stop moving. I have to think of a way to defeat the cannonball rhinos while dodging it. As I was doing that, the wound I first cut on it came to my attention. It was then that I remembered something, and I decided to try it out.

First, dodge the charge of the cannonball rhinos while letting it charge into a tree to stop it from moving. Up to this point is still the same as always, but――

"'Bind Ivy'!" [Ryouma]
"Guon!" [Rhinos]

I used wood magic, and the surrounding ivy wrapped around the trees began to wrap themselves around the cannonball rhinos.

The cannonball rhinos had its attention taken by the vines, but just my moving its body in all directions, it's already began to gradually pull itself away from the ivies. Then with a strong step, and with its power poured into its limbs, it charged. At that, it fully freed itself from the grasp of the ivies.

"A few seconds at most, huh? Let's try it! If it fails, then I'll just run with all my might!" [Rhyouma]

Again, I lured the cannonball rhinos as I ran back the direction we came from, and headed toward the lake.

The trees were mowed down quite a bit, so the view's now not as obstructed as it once was. Because of that I was able to get back to the late without stopping much, and was able to get there quickly. The small rhinos is sitting in front of its deceased parents' corpses… It shouldn't be a problem as long as I stay away from him.

"――――!!" [Big Rhinos]
"Take this!" [Ryouma]

I dodged the rhinos that charged from behind. When I did, the rhinos kept going and going until it plunged itself into the lake. Water burst up high into the air. Again, I was reminded of just how much power the rhinos had. But I don't have the time to stop moving. I stood at the border of the lake and the jungle to initiate my plan.

The cannonball rhinos that had charged into the lake, turned toward me as it raised itself. Then it began charging again.

"You're strong, but you're too dull! 'Bind Ivy'!" [Ryouma]

As I dodged the charge, I used Bind Ivy. As the rhinos charged into a tree, and stopped moving, its body was wrapped in ivy.

Right after that, I jumped onto the back of the cannonball rhinos with my ki reinforced body. Then I grabbed the ivy, and began strangling the rhinos' neck.

The ivy began to be torn off again, but I won't let the rhinos do as it pleases!

"'Mud Pool'!" [Ryouma]
"GUoA!?" [Big Rhinos]

As I activated my magic, the water and the ground began to mix, changing into mud, and swallowing the cannonball rhinos' legs. The ivies were creaking at the cannonball rhinos' pressure, but because of the mud that suddenly appeared, the rhinos' resistance vanished. The rhinos was no longer able to tear off the ivies.

Mud Pool is the combination of water attribute and earth attribute. It's a simple magic meant to transform the land into mud. I learned this magic after I heard about it from the adventurers in Gimuru, and practiced it by myself.

At the time, it was quite difficult to do. If I casted the magic poorly, then even my allies would lose their footing. Because of that the adventurers mentioned that it's generally only used when running away. But! Something like that doesn't matter when I'm on top of a magical beast!

"'Exchange'!" [Ryouma]

I held on to the neck of the struggling cannonball rhinos while I used Exchange to bring out the adamantite rapier. Then cladding it in ki, I thrusted it diagonally from the rhinos neck toward its head.

But the rapier couldn't reach past the tip of the rhinos' hide. But I already expected that the rapier wouldn't be able to pierce through easily. It was here that I changed my position while keeping myself from falling off the cannonball rhinos.

"Ha!!" [Ryouma]

With all of my strength, I pounded the heel of my palm onto the rapier.

"GUoOOO!?"

Because of the impact of that attack, the rapier that had pierced into the hide of the rhinos sunk deeper. The cannonball rhinos rose its voice, and its movements grew wilder.

"One more —time!" [Ryouma]

I struck again with my palm.

I don't know if you could this a tactic or not, but I'm doing exactly as I've planned. Stop the cannonball rhinos from moving, hit a vital spot with a blade, allowing it to stand. And then finish it off like that. The first stroke could only cut a shallow wound, but it still doesn't change the fact that it was strong enough to cut into the cannonball rhinos' skin. So I figured it should be possible to damage the rhinos enough so long as I'm able to focus my attack on one point.

I used the durable adamantite rapier for that reason. From the looks of things, it seems the rapier will be able to get through. This usage strikes me as somewhat absurd for a rapier, but so long as it works, anything's fine!

After two more strikes, the sensation transmitted to me by the pommel of the rapier changed. After another strike, the rapier sunk deep into the cannonball rhinos. But I didn't stopped there as I pushed it even deeper.

Using battle magic technique, I clad my entire body and the rapier in electric magic power. Then I fired off my magic through the tip of the rapier.

"'Thunder Bol t'" [Ryouma]

Intermediate electric magic 'Thunder Bolt'. Just as the name implies, an attack that summons electricity to strike against the target.

It didn't have much of an effect a while ago, but just as one would expect, firing it off from inside the body like this is quite effective. Immediately after casting it, the cannonball rhinos stopped moving, and it collapsed to the ground.

At that time, the ivies wrapped around the cannonball rhino were cut, and the cannonball rhino began to fall down into the mud. Immediately, I jumped off the cannonball rhino, and left the mud. I waited for a while, and after confirming it, I knew that the beast had died.

……I was cutting it pretty close there. It's good that I won~!!

"Even if it was strengthened by the poison of the doping bee, it seems it's still too early for me to challenge A Rank and S Rank magical beasts… Not that I have any plans of challenging those. To begin with, it's generally assumed that one has to form a party to challenge magical beasts above the B Rank.

As I muttered to myself while staring at the giant body of the cannonball rhinos, the smaller one approached me from behind.

"Heeey… you still feel like fighting——Mn?" [Ryouma]

Just when I thought it still felt like fighting, the cannonball rhinos rose its two forelegs as it stood up on its two hind-legs. This is…

"If I recall correctly, this pose signifies a cannonball rhinos' surrender, right?" [Ryouma]

It's written down in the information I gathered beforehand. At first, I thought it might just be trying to make its body appear bigger to threaten me, but that doesn't seem to be the case. But why? That's normally something a cannonball rhinos would show to another cannonball rhinos that managed to defeat it, so… –Ah! Could it be it's because I'd thrown it once? Or is it because I defeated the bigger one?

As I was thinking that to myself, I saw the small cannonball rhinos' feet slightly trembling. It might still be a kid, but it's body is still quite heavy. It should be painful for it to raise its body up with just two legs.

"Let's just leave the questions for later, and contract it now. It might be a B Rank magical beast, but it's still a kid, so it might not survive out here…" [Ryouma]

If I were to accept this little cannonball rhinos, then… As I thought that, I activated the contract of the slave demon magic. When I did, the contract was a success, and the cannonball rhinos became my slave demon. I named the little one, Rai.

After that, I began to heal Rai's wounds with the heal slimes. During that time, I had the grave slime retrieve the big cannonball rhinos and the two corpses that were most probably Rai's parents.

Rai quietly watched the corpses be retrieved as he continued to receive treatment. I thought he would go wild, but I guess magical beasts understand the rule of the jungle well.

Not wanting to waste the ingredients in the corpse of Rai's two parents, I immediately took them to the Dimension Home, and disassembled them. I retrieved their pelt, their horns, and their bones. The muscularity of the meat makes it unsuitable for humans, but it's enough as feed for the slimes. As I was feeding them to the slimes for lunch, the mimic slime began to transform into a cannonball rhinos.

I tried to order the slime to stop the transformation, but seeing Rai look at the transformed mimic slime, and then cuddle up to it, I stopped. Instead, I ordered the mimic slime to stay in that form for a while.

…I don't know if this is good for Rai, but I'll just leave them like this for now.

Just to be safe, I ordered Rai not to go wild. Then we left the Dimension Home, and we moved again to leave the Great Forest of Shurus. After 30 minutes, we coincidentally came across the nest of doping bees that was most likely responsible for causing the big cannonball rhinos to go berserk.

The nest was about as big as a drum as it clung to the branch of a big tree. I took out 50 sticky slimes, and had them climb up the tree, and swallow the nest.

Of course, the doping bees attacked the slimes, but if their stingers can't reach the nucleus, then their poison won't have any effect.

The doping bees that attacked the sticky slimes were glued to them one after another, and they eventually died by suffocation.

The same happened to the bees inside the nest. But just to make sure everything's safe, I blocked all of the holes of the nest for 30 minutes. Then when I saw that nothing was resisting anymore, I retrieved the nest. Naturally, I retrieved the corpses of the doping bees that were inside the sticky slimes as well.

Well then… A lot of unexpected things happened, but now I'll at least be able to go back to Gimuru. I have my treatment, the store, and a bunch of other things that need to be done. And then there's also Rai. I managed to form a contract with him, but there's still definitely a lot of thinking to be done regarding the future.

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